bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

Issue 73 • Summer 2023

Coronation Weekend

The Society organised a packed weekend of activities to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

The Curator of Westminster Abbey's talk preceded dinner in Pearson Hall; a programme of events weaved around the Big Lunch; a Barn Dance in the evening; and many organisations took part in Volunteering Day on the Monday.

Bridge is the newsletter of the **Sonning & Sonning Eye Society**

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>>Eye on Sonning
a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

It is good to see the increase in membership resulting from the last bumper edition of *Bridge* and to see so many younger families settling in the village. The Society is one of the ways in which new residents can make their views known and help to shape the place they live in. With that in mind, and as it's been a while since we reported on the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan, this edition of "View from the Bridge" provides an update.

It all started with the packed open meeting in Pearson Hall in February 2020 when the Neighbourhood Plan was first launched. The Steering Group then issued a questionnaire to all residents and produced a draft Plan which represented the views expressed. This draft was circulated to all residents last November and subsequent versions have been submitted to Wokingham Borough Council for their informal review.

As reported in recent issues of Bridge, there has been a rash of unwelcome planning proposals, some of which are still going through the planning approval stages:

- The 57 flats in 3 blocks adjacent to the Avery care home (previously Signature) in Old Bath Road have been approved.
- The proposed dementia care home to be built following demolition of numbers 101/101A in Pound Lane has been refused and the appeal was unsuccessful.
- The application to build 13 houses on the site on the corner of Pound Lane and Duffield Road has been approved on appeal, the application to replace them with a 70 bed dementia care home was refused but has gone to appeal, the outcome is still awaited.
- The application to build 50 houses on the practice ground at Sonning Golf Course is pending.

With this ever-changing situation drafting a Neighbourhood Plan is like hitting a moving target; the current draft supports the 25 new houses to be built at Bull Close at the end of Garde Road but excludes the 50 houses on the golf course as this development is opposed by both Sonning Parish Council and the Society. As it will be at least another year before the Neighbourhood Plan goes through the statutory process leading to its adoption the situation is likely to change yet again. Because new housing is such a key issue we have applied for a Housing Needs Assessment study to be carried out by a specialist consultant in order that the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan regarding the number and type of new housing are evidence-based. The ensuing draft then has to go through two more statutory stages and residents will have another chance to comment before it finally goes for independent review prior to a referendum.

Executive Committee & Panels

Patrick Hamblin, Planning & Traffic Panel

Meetings & Planning Applications

Three meetings of the Panel have been held since the last edition of *Bridge*. A total of 19 applications were discussed.

Comments were sent to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) on the following application:

- The proposed 15 metre high telecoms mast in Sonning Lane.
- 49 West Drive – proposed erection of a five-bedroom house following demolition of the existing property.
- Reading Blue Coat School – proposed new fire escape stairs.
- Sonning Golf Club practice ground site – amendments to existing plans for a revised figure of 50 houses
- 101/101A Pound Lane (dementia care home) - refused.
- Sonning Golf Club site, Pound Lane (Savista Developments application for care home to replace houses) – the hearing was held in very early May, but a decision is still awaited.

Planning Appeals

The situation of the two planning appeals referred to in the previous edition of *Bridge* is as follows:

Local Plan Update

It is now understood that no revision to the Local Plan Update will be made until release of the revised National Policy Planning Framework by the Government.

Village Gateway in Sonning Lane

WBC has agreed to install new gateways either side of Sonning Lane to replace the old gateways, one of which has been removed as the posts were rotted.

Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

This is discussed in the article above.

Traffic

Monitoring of traffic speeds continues to be carried out by the Community Speed Watch Team, although there is still a shortage of team members.

Some discussions are ongoing relating to a suggestion of making the junction of Sonning Lane and the A4 a 'no right turn'. This has potentially far-reaching implications for Pearson Road and other Sonning roads as traffic would use this route to leave Sonning. The school coaches are an example of the types of vehicles that would use alternative routes. Our comments have been made to Cllr Michael Firmager (WBC).

Sonning Parish Council Planning Committee meetings

The Society continues to monitor all the applications and attends the meetings where appropriate.

Coronation Events

Coronation Day Dinner

The Society organised a special celebratory dinner for 80 members and their guests which took place in Pearson Hall during the evening of Coronation Day, Saturday 6th May. A pre-dinner talk was given by Sonning resident Dr. Susan Jenkins, who has been Curator of Westminster Abbey since 2014 and who gave a fascinating talk on the history and hidden details on the Abbey. This was followed by a champagne toast to the newly crowned King and Mike read out the following Ode to King Charles III written by Honorary Life Member Jane Gascoine:

Ode to King Charles III *by Jane Gascoine*

Well done Elizabeth
We won't see your likeness again
It's the turn of your eldest son
To take on the important reign

And it's farewell Elizabeth
Thanks for a job well done
Now it's the turn of Charles III
To inherit the throne and crown

The responsibility is his
To do an important job well
Let us hope he'll do as good a job
As you, Ma'am, but you can never tell

But if he listened to your training
And I don't doubt that he did
He will be the best King reigning
That Great Britain ever had.

The catering for the three course dinner was provided by Emma's Kitchen and the appropriately decorated hall made the evening a fitting tribute to His Majesty.

Sunday Celebrations

With funding from the Sonning Volunteer Fire Brigade Trust the Society organised a fun-packed programme of events in Pearson Hall and the Sonning Club garden, open to all Sonning residents, their friends and family.

Attendees at the lunchtime event in Pearson Hall brought their own picnic lunch, hampers were judged by a panel and the winner, Jane McIlroy, received a bottle of Coronation Gin. Entertainment was provided by the tribute band AbbaStars, tables and chairs were moved for the second session to enable guests to join in with singing and dancing.

Then it was the turn of the Sonning CE Primary School choir who sang songs specially written for the Coronation. They were followed by maypole dancers in Sonning Club gardens, fortunately the weather was magnificent and the event was enjoyed by all.

The final event of the day was a Barn Dance in Pearson Hall with professional caller Mike Ruff. As guests were still enjoying the warm weather in the Sonning Club gardens it took a while to encourage them to return to the hall but by the end of the evening at 8pm the hall was full.

Volunteering Day

Courtesy of the Pearson Hall Management Committee, who had made the hall available at no charge over the weekend, 15 local organisations and charities showcased their activities in the hall on Monday 7th May. Tea and cakes were provided by the Sonning Glebe WI, beautiful flowers were on display by the Sonning Floral Arrangement Society, stressed attendees were given massages by Hannah Hyland from Greener Health Physio and tickets were on sale for the upcoming RNLI Garden Party. Other exhibitors included Link, Sonning Lawn Tennis Club, Macmillan, Age Concern, the Charvil Caterpillar Club, Rotary, Friends of St Andrew's Church, Sonning Twinning Association, Sonning Regatta Committee and The Cowshed.

Commemorative Plaque & Medals

The Society worked with Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning CE Primary School Headmaster, Phil Sherwood, to choose a suitable memento that could be given to young children from the village to commemorate the Coronation. Commemorative medals were chosen, inscribed with the name of the child and featuring the official coronation logo, and 350 medals were purchased by Sonning Parish Council. They were handed out to the children who attend Sonning CE Primary School at a ceremony in the school the day before the Coronation and to children who do not attend the school on Volunteering Day.

A commemorative plaque, donated to the school by the Society, was unveiled by Theresa May at the ceremony with representatives from the Society, the Parish Council and school governors present.

Many thanks to Rod Thomas for all the marvellous photographs and to Mike Hart for the wise words.

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Andy Bell, he has been the Society's Honorary Secretary since 2009. Our thoughts and condelences go out to his wife Sue and family.

The Sonning Regatta

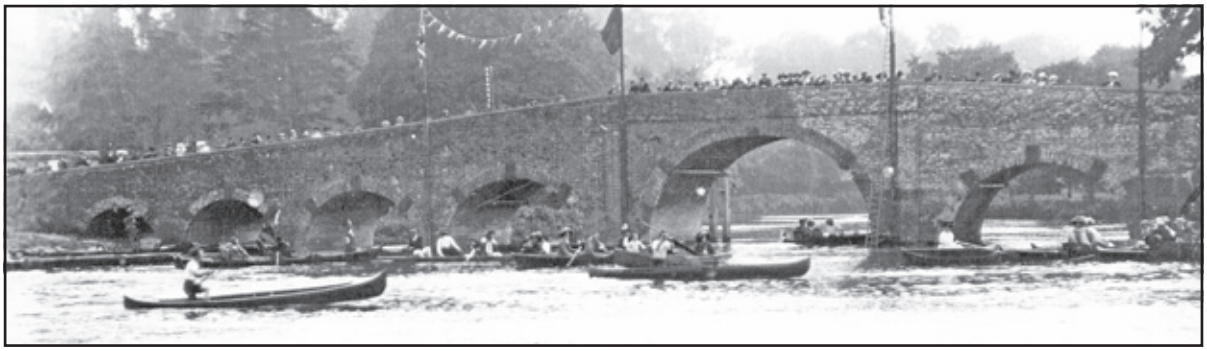
Rob Jones, Chair of the Sonning Regatta and Elegant Picnic

On Saturday 3rd June the Sonning Regatta returned to the banks of the Thames but with a new twist. The regatta moved to its original Victorian location on the Wharf in front of The Great House and Coppa Club, just to the east of Sonning Bridge. This was an altogether more convenient position for both competitors and spectators. The beautiful weather encouraged a large crowd to enjoy not only the sunshine, but the Great House BBQ, Tacito street food and The Village Hamper ice creams and of course the racing on the river.

This year three types of racing took place, the ever-popular Katakanus for the youngsters, Paddleboards for everyone and for the first time at Sonning, both adult and junior Dragon Boat racing. Dressed up in all kinds of outfits and with drummers beating out the time, teams "Puff the Magic Dragon" and "Birthday Crew" won the Adult and Junior Dragon Boat categories. Team "I am Groat", later changed to "I am Great", won the Katakanu competition. In a very competitive Paddleboard challenge, one 'Adrian' won in a super close final against a gentleman called Chris!

The event started in the early 1900s but paused before World War II. It was revived for the millennium in 2000 and thereafter held every two years as one element of the Sonning Festival. This year a new committee was formed to continue the event and decided to make the regatta an annual event for the village of Sonning. The Regatta Committee are extremely grateful to our sponsors, The French Horn, The Great House and Coppa Club, Sonning Boats & Launches and Shiplake College for helping us to make the event extra special. From the comments we've received, both spectators and competitors thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Photos from the archive assembled by the Society during the production of the Village Voices book:
On top: 1909 Regatta, The Victoria Cross Race
Below: From the 1911 Regatta, Left: Tug of War in Punts; Right: Double Sculls



Thoughts of a New Committee Member

Deborah Simmons

My joining the Executive Committee of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society was very well timed as my first meeting was in December 2022 - there is always wine at the Christmas meeting as well as a few home-made nibbles. It made for a very sociable and friendly first meeting, which ensured that I did return to the next meeting early in 2023. It also set the tone for future meetings, although I have come to realise that they continue to be engaging and collaborative meetings even without the Sauvignon Blanc!

I knew of the Society itself, mainly because we had signed up to membership when we first moved to Sonning Eye in 2016. Lesley Heaney, who is the membership secretary, had made us feel very welcome including making a mention of our arrival to the village in the society magazine, *Bridge*. This is a great way to ensure new arrivals feel part of the joint community of the two villages. It is also one of the many ways that the Society contributes to building a sense of community through the great work of the committee, which I was not familiar with until one of our neighbours let it be known that she thought I should step up and be a part of it. That was how I ended up being a part of the Christmas celebration and also how I then became involved with the committee's plans for the recent Coronation celebrations too.

There are also established sub-committees which meet to discuss aspects such as planning and traffic as well as social events – and they do discuss these things and very thoroughly too! Every now and then, something happens which merits a special sub-committee being set-up which is what happened earlier this year as we decided that something should take place for the villagers to celebrate this momentous occasion (especially given the success of the Jubilee celebrations last year). A number of us met on several evenings to pull together ideas and take the necessary steps to put on the events which took place. There was also some great liaison with other groups in the village, such as the school, the Parish Council and the church to ensure that everything that was being organised fitted in with – and enhanced – other activities. The committee is very lucky in having a very proactive and involved chairman – that makes life so much easier as things actually do happen! To be honest, all the members of the committee are very involved – and because they are, it means the responsibility for making things happen doesn't just fall on one or two people.

One of my concerns when I was approached to join the committee was how much time it was going to take up and would I be able to fit this commitment in around work and other responsibilities. Thankfully, the answer is yes. We have meetings every other month on a Wednesday evening in Pearson Hall and, even though they do last an hour or so, the time goes very quickly as we share updates on the various areas of interest within the villages. It's a great opportunity to find out what is going on on both sides of the bridge and also to look for opportunities for both villages to work together and be of benefit to the joint community. That can sometimes be stopping something happening but at other times it's all about making something happen.

We're always looking for new members to join the committee. If being able to shape the community and make things happen appeals to you I would encourage you to come along to the next meeting and see how you could get involved. Or wait until December and come for the wine!

Parish Councillors

Following recent changes to both Parish's personnel, here are the current incumbents:

Sonning

Trefor Fisher - Chairman
Tony Farnese - Councillor
Peter Morrison - Treasurer
Andy Halliday - Councillor
Christopher John - Councillor (new appt.)
Lesley Bates - Parish Clerk

Eye & Dunsden

David Woodward - Chairman
Richard Berkley - Vice-Chairman
Ian Pringle - Councillor
Suzanne Abraham - Councillor (new appt.)
Mandy Sermon - Parish Clerk

Our Next Events

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

TALK: A History of Reading's Hospitals

Friday 29th September, 7.30 for 7.45pm

Our Speaker, Lionel Williams, trained as a medical photographer and is from the Royal Medical Museum in Reading. His talk will cover the history of, and changes to, the hospitals in Reading from 1837 to the present day. Although mainly concerning the Royal Berkshire Hospital, which opened in 1839, he will also cover the Battle & Prospect Park Hospitals.

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

Tickets as usual include a glass of wine and are £4 for members or £5 for guests.

TALK: Adventures with Neil Pitts

Friday 27th October, 7.30 for 7.45pm

Neil is an adventurer and writer who, with 2 friends, attempted to ski the length of Norway, more than 3,000km. Having contracted Covid in 2020 and suffered from Long Covid for 16 months he was determined to get fit and healthy enough to undertake this challenging trip in 2022.

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

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

Annual General Meeting and Supper: Saturday 18th November at 7.15pm

Keep the date free - full details to follow in our next edition.

Physiomoves

Hannah Hyland, Integrative Physiotherapist

I love Sonning and feel we are blessed by the vast space to move, stretch, breathe and honour time in nature to create connection, freedom and joy. As a chartered physiotherapist I believe the most important element to rehabilitation is movement and breath awareness.

'Motion is the lotion and we use it or loose it. Functional movement is our natural medicine.'

Our bodies complain when we sit at a desk, computer or arm chair for 6-8 hours a day. We become stiff, asymmetrical and weak, manifesting as aches and pains.

A simple daily movement routine incorporating a variety of stretches, functional postures and breathing exercises can keep these complaints at bay, rehabilitate injuries or illnesses and weave the way for a healthier and more enjoyable lifestyle.

We have re-purposed the beautiful listed wooden shed at The Old Forge as a Physiotherapy Clinic. I am fortunate enough to share the space as Sonning's Integrative Health clinic- a team of holistic therapists including Chinese Acupuncturist, Counsellors, Cognitive Behavioural Therapists, Reiki Practitioner and Massage Therapist.

We are excited to share our **Physiomoves Community Physiotherapy** programme that started last year in Pearson Hall and has since grown to support a diverse range of communities including refugee and asylum hotels. We were fortunate enough to host a sunset Physiomoves class at Sonning Lock last month where proceeds were donated to support this. (A special thanks to John Irvin, Sonning's Lock Keeper). Offering an inclusive physiotherapy program, supporting community, sustainability and integrative health-(and life)-care. We teach an evidence based program and support connection through conscious movement and breath to build a natural consequence of self esteem, strength, balance, comfort, joy and wellbeing.

Our 6-week programme includes 1:1 advice and goal focused evidence-based treatment, including movement, self-release tools, breathing and relaxation techniques. Taught in an integrative group setting, accessible and open to all.

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.

19th - 29th July 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: Dazzling Divas. Issy Van Randwyck brings seven legendary performers to life in one magical evening	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
1st - 5th August 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, directed by Tam Williams, played out in the Mill's restaurant	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
9th August at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting in Pearson Hall	Members of the Society are very welcome
10th August - 23rd Sept 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: How The Other Half Loves, a classic comedy by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Robin Herford	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
28th Sept - 18th Nov 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: It's Her Turn Now, adapted from Ray Cooney's classic farce Out of Order but now with female MPs behaving badly	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
29th September doors open 7.30pm	S&SES Talk: A History of Reading's Hospitals, from 1837 to today, given by Lionel Williams from the Royal Medical Museum	Tickets are online or pay at the door Society members and guests welcome
11th October at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting in Pearson Hall	Members of the Society are very welcome
27th October doors open 7.30pm	S&SES Talk: Neil Pitts, Adventurer, will be giving an illustrated talk on his attempt to ski the 3,000km length of Norway	Tickets are online or pay at the door Society members and guests welcome
18th November at 7.15pm	S&SES Annual General Meeting and Supper	Members and guests are very welcome
29th Nov - 20th Jan 2024 2.15pm & 8.15pm	Cole Porter's "Swellegent, Elegant Musical" High Society directed by Mill favourite Joseph Pitcher, with live music in the bar on Fri/Sat nights	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
6th December at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting in Pearson Hall	Members of the Society are very welcome

>> Membership information

A warm welcome is extended to new members:

Mr & Mrs K Brown
Mr & Mrs Casey
Mrs P Cronin
Mr C Dexter
Mr & Mrs A Halliday
Mr & Mrs D Howes
Mr & Mrs C John
Ms M Kuyken
Mr & Mrs P Morrison
Mr & Mrs B Nicolaou
Mr & Mrs P Robinson
Mr & Mrs S Sheppard
Mrs I Wood

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.

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