



# 2014/2015

## Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2014/2015

# Executive Committee Report

Mike Hart, Chairman

The Executive Committee members of the Society this year have been: Mike Hart (Chairman), Bob Hine (Vice Chairman), Andy Bell (Hon. Secretary), Alan Furness (Hon. Treasurer), Jeremy Gilmore, Patrick Hamblin (Chairman of Planning & Traffic Panel), Lesley Heaney (Membership Secretary), Annabella Marks, Janine Moore and Pauline Simmonds (Coordinator of Education and Social Panel).

As you all know our President, John Edmonds, passed away in August. His contribution to the society will be sorely missed. We were used to him keeping us on our toes with his detailed knowledge of the Society's constitution and his eagle eye for any errors in the minutes of meetings. We have lost a mine of information with his passing. Most of us were unaware until we read his obituaries of the important international roles that he played in his working life before he took on his civic duties in the Society and for Sonning Parish Council.

Your committee met six times during the year with good attendances and in between committee meetings the members all played an active part in keeping the Society running. We are very fortunate in this respect and I am most grateful to the committee members and to Diana Coulter, who has so ably continued her work as editor of Bridge, and to Penny Feathers for her continued support.

## Society Membership

Lesley Heaney, Membership Secretary

The Society's membership stands at 217, which is made up as follows:

- 2 Corporate
- 180 Double
- 35 Single

7 members did not renew this year but on a positive note we have welcomed 15 new members.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining the Society, please let me know and I will contact them.

The key objectives of the Society in respect of the villages of Sonning and Sonning Eye remain as they were originally set 10 years ago:

- To promote high standards of planning and architecture
- To provide education in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the villages
- To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvements of historic, natural or public interest.

Whilst we do not have a statutory responsibility for planning matters we make representations to the planning authority as the civic society of the two villages and we believe our views are taken into account. Patrick Hamblin lists the many cases where we have made such representations later in this report.

In the area of education we have continued to arrange visits, lectures and heritage walks, all of which are extremely well attended.

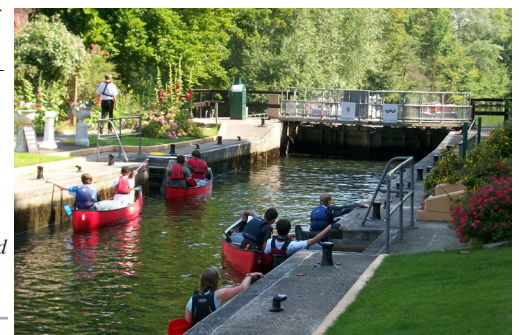
Pauline Simmonds summarises the visits and lectures in her following report.

We have increased our membership during the year. We welcome our new members and thank them and our regulars for their continuing interest and involvement in the Society's activities this year, details of which are given in the following pages.



*Our late President, John Edmonds, seen with our Vice-President, Revd Canon Chris Clarke, on the occasion of Chris's retirement as first Chairman of the Society in 2008.*

*The leisure use of the river and its banks is an important aspect of the lives of Sonning and Sonning Eye. The Society helps to ensure that our natural environment is valued and protected. (Courtesy: R Needham)*



# Financial Report for year as at 31 August 2015

Alan Furness, Honorary Treasurer

For this year's report, the General Fund is analysed between the Village Voices project and Other Activities.

Sales of The Village Voices book have slowed down with sales during the last year amounting to 11 copies. By the date of this report total income from book sales was £3,323.90 and 365 books had been sold.

As regards Other Activities, the excess of expenditure over income for other activities is £582.49 as analysed in the Financial Statement below, which together with the previous year's credit balance brought forward, shows a credit balance carried forward £3,310.62.

## SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

### GENERAL FUND AT 31ST AUGUST 2015

		£
BALANCE AT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2014		
General	3,893.11	
Village Voices	<u>2,758.05</u>	
		6,651.16
EXCESS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR		
General	(582.49)	
Village Voices	<u>129.00</u>	
		(453.49)
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2015		
General	3,310.62	
Village Voices	<u>2,887.05</u>	
		<u>6,197.67</u>

### **GENERAL FUND REPRESENTED BY:**

CASH AT BANK - RESERVE ACCOUNT	6,100.00
CASH AT BANK - CURRENT ACCOUNT	97.67
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2015	<u>6,197.67</u>

### INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2014 TO 31ST AUGUST 2015

<u>INCOME</u>	£	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£
MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,101.00	NEWSLETTER	675.25
AGM	1,302.00	AGM	1,703.04
HURST WALK	87.00	HURST WALK	97.00
HIDDEN THAMES	226.00	HIDDEN THAMES	85.45
THE HARDWICK ESTATE	192.00	THE HARDWICK ESTATE	192.00
BANK INTEREST	2.92	SUBSCRIPTIONS	109.00
		GENERAL EXPENSES	245.83
		LIABILITY INSURANCE	385.84
VILLAGE VOICES INCOME:		VILLAGE VOICES EXPENDITURE:	
VILLAGE VOICES BOOK SALES	129.00	Miscellaneous	0.00
		EXCESS (DEFICIT) INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR	
		General	(582.49)
		Village Voices	<u>129.00</u>
			(453.49)
	<u>3,039.92</u>		<u>3,039.92</u>

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 2015.

Sonning:  
12th October 2015

A.G.A. Williams  
Chartered Accountant

# Planning & Traffic Panel

Patrick Hamblin, Chairman

During this, my second year as Chairman of the Panel, other members were Andy Bell (Secretary), David Bates, Mike Hart, Bob Hine and Brian O'Callaghan, with additional assistance from Ali Driver (environmental advice), Maureen Meer (legal advice) and Allan Williams (south of A4 advice). We continue to be short of representation from Sonning Eye. Our late President, John Edmonds, was always an interested adviser and ex officio member.

Our meetings take place monthly in Sonning Club. The dates are on the website ([www.sonning.org.uk](http://www.sonning.org.uk)) and meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend. The Panel also aims to attend all meetings of the Sonning Parish Council (SPC) Planning Committee as an observer so that SPC's views can be considered.

Weekly lists of planning applications for Sonning (from Wokingham Borough Council) and Sonning Eye (from South Oxfordshire District Council) are discussed as necessary. Comments are made on issues that seem significant. During the year we have commented on various issues in respect of:

- Reading Blue Coat School
- Little Cottage, High Street
- No cold calling zones signage
- Land adjacent to Keeper's Cottage and Pound Lane development, Sonning Golf Club: our feedback prompted WBC to apply preservation orders to a large number of trees in and near Pound Lane following the felling of a large oak tree.
- August Field and Acre Field, Sonning Lane: we met the developers of August Field and Acre Field to discuss possible architectural features of the proposed development.
- The Great House, Thames Street

- Mill House, Sonning Eye
- Birchley, Old Bath Road and 51 West Drive.

We have continued to support the Sonning Eye Action Group relating to infilling of gravel pits with inert waste and submitted comments to Oxfordshire County Council.

We continue to press for provision of cycle racks in Sonning. One rack is soon to be placed outside Pearson Hall funded by the Scarecrow Committee and other locations are being investigated.

The 'gates' to the village in Sonning Lane were refurbished, also courtesy of the Scarecrow Committee, and look much improved.

Our thanks go to Ali Driver, who mediated discussions with Network Rail about the tree work carried out in the Cutting. Network Rail's contractors cleared a very large number of trees and undergrowth from this area, which was a superb natural habitat for birds and wildlife. Ali Driver is still monitoring the situation.

We participated in a newly constituted working group with SPC Highways Working Group to discuss common issues. SPC subsequently decided to discontinue this group but the Panel continues its work with a view to submitting a report to SPC in due course.

The Conservation Area Appraisal is now with WBC for final completion before it is launched for public comment later this year or early in 2016. The Society's thanks go to Diana Coulter and Brian O'Callaghan for their continuing work in this area. When completed this will be an important reference document for future planning applications in the Conservation Area.

The Panel is still hoping to continue its previous work with SPC of monitoring of overweight vehicles crossing Sonning Bridge although the problem appears to have improved this year.

# Education & Social Panel

Pauline Simmonds, Coordinator

Our Panel was set up to raise awareness of our environment, its heritage, and inhabitants, past or present, and, aided by two publications, I am pleased to report that we achieved many of these aims and had another successful year.

The river Thames and its wildlife were explored in March in an illustrated talk in the Pearson Hall. Based on his book, the author, Richard Mayon-White, provided some fascinating details about hidden pathways and conservation projects in the surrounding area and beyond. The evening was very well attended; it provoked a lot of questions and was greatly enjoyed by all.

In June we were again near the Thames, this time out in the open as we explored the ancient Hardwick Estate and Manor (pictured) near Mapledurham. Tea and a guided tour by the owner, Sir Julian Rose, were a special treat enabling us to view original Elizabethan plasterwork and panelling behind the scenes, as well as a 'real' tennis court, still in use today.



The Heritage Walks in September again provided plenty of architectural information right up to the 21st century and our stand at the Village Show, managed by Panel members, attracted a number of visitors. Three new members joined and many bought tickets for our autumn events.

In October Gillian Stevens, from the Berkshire Family History Society, encouraged members to take a look at local archives, using a Sonning family as an example. Beginning with a name from the 'Record of Burials' book, she uncovered some fascinating details about village life back through the decades until early Victorian times - as well as some very useful tips on how to manage modern websites!

We are lucky to have some excellent Panel members, Diana Coulter, Penny Feathers, Lesley Green, Patrick Hamblin, Annabella Marks and Joyce Reed. All have offered ideas and practical help in the planning of events, including the Supper this evening, and we thank them for their continued support.

# Minutes of 11th AGM, Pearson Hall, 22 November 2014

## 1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Mike Hart extended a warm welcome to everyone present and said that it was good to have another full house for the Society's Annual General Meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES;** Apologies had been received from Caroline Rimell and Jeremy and Caroline Gilmore.

## 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the 10th Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 23 November 2013, were approved without amendment on the proposal of Diana Coulter, seconded by Theresa May.

## 4. BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS

### a) Chairman's Report

Mike Hart said that this year had been the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Society, which had been marked by a special edition of *Bridge* and was to conclude with an anniversary dinner. He was pleased that the Society's President was present. Chris Clarke, the Vice President and first Chairman, had hoped to attend but circumstances had prevented this. Mike Hart reported that the Conservation Area Appraisal was near to completion. The draft had been passed to Sonning Parish Council (SPC) for review, prior to submission to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). He felt the Society's relationship with SPC had greatly improved. Society representatives regularly attended Council meetings and the Executive had been pleased to welcome Trefor Fisher, a Councillor, to its meetings as an observer. Mike Hart thanked the Executive for its enthusiasm and hard work. New members were required so he encouraged anyone interested to contact him to discuss what was involved. Questions from the floor were invited but there were none.

### b) Planning & Traffic Panel Report

Patrick Hamblin reported that the Panel had met monthly and reviewed 30 applications, submitting comments on six. Of current concern was a proposal to build four houses at Birchley, Old Bath Road, which was felt to be a clear case of back land development. The Panel supported Sonning Eye Action Group (SEAG) by submitting comments to the National Planning Casework Unit about the infilling of gravel pits with inert waste. An attempt to have the Minister of State call in the planning decision failed, so SEAG was now seeking redress via the Ombudsman. Comments to Reading University about the poor quality of the farm sign in Charvil Lane had been more successful and WBC was considering an application to renew it. WBC's decision to permit the flying of flags on the former fire station site, despite being in breach of planning guidelines, was very disappointing; it begged questions about the point of guidelines if they were not upheld. He concluded by inviting Ali Driver to update members about recent damage to the Cutting embankment. The destruction of woodland in the Cutting was the most serious case of environmental damage in the 10 years of the Society's existence. More than 60 acres had been damaged before Ali Driver had been able to step in, with assistance from Theresa May, to halt the work. He had drawn up a list of recommended steps and was due to meet with Network Rail shortly. Early indications were that the company was prepared to accept some of his recommendations. Ali Driver felt he might need to turn to the Society if the going got tough. Members showed their appreciation of his excellent work.

### c) Education & Social Panel Report

Pauline Simmonds said that during the year there had been a varied programme of events, which had been well supported, in particular, the visit in May to H G Matthews Brick Works near Chesham and the talk in June on climate change. She added that there were still plenty of topics to explore and that she looked forward to organising another interesting and varied programme for the year ahead. She finished by thanking the members of the Panel for their hard work and Society members for their continued support.

## 5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Alan Furness said that the financial report for the year to 31 August 2014 was set out in the Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2013/14. He highlighted the continued success of the *Village Voices* book, which had now produced income of £3,194 from the sale of 354 copies. Excess income over expenditure was £404 in the year giving a credit balance carried forward of £3,893. Questions from the floor were invited but there were none.

## 6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mike Hart said that Allan Williams, who unfortunately could not be present, had agreed to continue as Independent Examiner for another year. He thanked Allan Williams for agreeing to do so.

## 7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The President took over the chair and referred to the Constitution which said that the Chairman, Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer shall normally be elected annually at the AGM and may be re-elected to the same position for up to 5 years. In exceptional circumstances it was permitted to extend this period annually. He reported that Alan Furness had served as Hon Treasurer for 7 years and Andy Bell as Hon Secretary for 5 years. Both had been nominated to stand again and the President suggested that the exceptional circumstances for extending their terms were that both performed their duties excellently and replacements had yet to be identified. Nominations for election as the Society's officers were: Chairman, Mike Hart, proposed by John Edmonds, seconded by Alan Furness; Vice Chairman, Bob Hine, proposed by Andrew McCoy, seconded by Karen McCoy; Hon Secretary, Andy Bell, proposed by Ken Peters, seconded by Alan Furness; and Hon Treasurer, Alan Furness, proposed by Andy Bell, seconded by Patrick Hamblin. It was proposed by Penny Feathers, seconded by John Woodhouse and agreed unanimously that the aforementioned be elected en bloc.

## 8. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

There were three nominations for election to the Executive Committee. These were: Patrick Hamblin, proposed by Alan Furness, seconded by Mike Hart; Annabella Marks, proposed by John Edmonds, seconded by Mike Hart; and Janine Moore, proposed by Lesley Heaney, seconded by Trefor Fisher. It was proposed by Nick Marks, seconded by Penny Feathers and agreed unanimously that the aforementioned be elected en bloc.

Before handing the chair back to Mike Hart, John Edmonds said that he was delighted that the Society was celebrating its tenth anniversary. He noted that many people present had been members from the beginning. He added that now that he was in his 94th year, he had given up late nights so he would not be staying on for the dinner. He was sorry that Chris and Christine Clarke were unable to attend and that he would miss Theresa May's toast to the Society.

## 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Hart resumed the chair. After thanking John Edmonds for his excellent handling of the election of officers and members of the Executive Committee, he invited the meeting to raise any other items of business. There were none, so he closed the meeting by wishing everyone an enjoyable evening.

