



# The Otford Society Newsletter

Registered with the Civic Trust

Affiliated to the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies

APRIL 2006

## **NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE OTFORD SOCIETY**

**Thursday 6th April 2006 – 8 pm – in the Memorial Hall**

All members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting. This is your opportunity to voice your opinion on village matters and to influence the policies of the Otford Society.

The present Executive Committee is:

Ken Gunderson:	Chairman
Carol Griffiths:	Secretary
Alf Cook:	Vice-Chairman and Treasurer
Vincent Tilley:	Membership Secretary
Andrew Barber:	Walks leaflets & NEWSLETTER distribution
Tony Wiltshire	
Derek Buck	
Jeff Lee	

Nominations for new Committee members can be made on the night, or in advance, provided they have a seconder and the permission of the nominee. All present Committee, except the Chairman, are prepared to stand again. If a new Chair does not come forward, the meeting must decide on the way forward for the Society.

The Annual Report of the Society is contained in this edition of the Newsletter. It is not intended to read it again before adoption in order to keep business down to a minimum. Financial accounts are also included; a signed audited copy will be available at the meeting.

**Speaker:** Louise Shrubsole will speak on the Sevenoaks Rural Energy Focus, which is about energy-saving measures and grants available.

Refreshments will be served.

# MINUTES OF THE AGM OF THE OTFORD SOCIETY HELD ON 21st April 2005, 8pm, Memorial Hall

1. The Chairman welcomed all members present (approx. 70). There were two apologies for absence: Ruth Fleming and Fay Plant.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2004, held on 6th May 2004 in Otford Memorial Hall as printed in the Newsletter of April 2005. These were adopted. Proposed: John Bolton. Seconded: Pat Smith.

### **Matters arising:**

Laing's development, Station Approach. Construction is progressing.  
Footpath 49 – there is to be an enquiry next year.

3. **Chairman's Report**

The Public Meeting with SDC on 20th April 2005 was discussed. Cliff Ward (ODHS) had written a letter to the SDC. A copy was given to the Chairman and to the Chairman of the Parish Council. A letter will be sent to the Chronicle, by the Chairman, expressing our views on the meeting. He also felt it was just a PR process by the SDC as they did not answer any questions about their planning decisions. Jeff Lee said that it was a matter of interpretation and judgement. There was pressure from local government on officers to deliver decisions. There was much discussion about the SDC meeting and David Seeley proposed 'that the Society has no confidence in District Cllr Jill Davison'. This was seconded by Geoffrey Levien. The vote was unanimous.

4. **Treasurer's Report**

Alf Cook presented the Accounts, which were circulated at the meeting. Funds stand at £17,901.74, an increase on 2004. This includes the Pond appeal of £5,553.54. These were adopted. Proposed: Gwynneth Miller. Seconded: George Batson.

5. **Membership Secretary's Report**

Vincent Tilley reported that Membership numbers were steady, but also said that new members were always needed.

6. **Walks Leaflets**

Andrew Barber reported that the leaflet had been re-installed in the Sevenoaks Tourist Information Centre, thanks to the intervention of the Town Clerk. Costs have risen, but distribution successful.

7. **Newsletter**

The next one is in June – copy always needed.

8. **Activities**

St George's Day/Shakespeare commemoration – dinner held – 2006 doubtful as 23rd April is a Sunday.

Garden Party – date and venue to be arranged.

Trafalgar/Sea Britain evening – 22nd October 2005. OVMH booked for bi-centenary commemoration.

9. **Election of Officers**

The Chairman stated his intention to step down. If no immediate replacement found he would continue for an interim fixed period.

**Chairman** : Ken Gunderson

**Treasurer/Vice Chairman** : Alf Cook

**Membership Secretary** : Vincent Tilley

**Secretary** : Carol Griffiths

**Committee Members** : Andrew Barber, Tony Wiltshire,  
Jeff Lee and Derek Buck

Proposed: Joan Stephenson

Seconded: Pat Smith

Proposed: Joyce Shaw

Seconded: John Bolton

Proposed: Geoffrey Levian

Seconded: Sid Shaw

Proposed: Ken Gunderson

Seconded: Marian Wills

Proposed: Gwynneth Miller

Seconded: Christine Bourne

**Interval for Tea/Coffee**

10. **Open Forum**

There was a question about the pond. A new report on its condition is due. A film company were making a commercial and filmed the pond with a shark's fin apparently swimming in it.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND COMMENTS ON OTFORD MATTERS DURING THE PAST YEAR**

I thank the Executive Committee members for their support, and for their contribution towards village matters.

Membership strength, which is all important, has been well maintained. The Society remains one of the largest amenity groups in the area. This success is largely due to efforts of our Liaison Officers, who continue to do sterling work. The newly formed pressure group RADIO (Residents Against Development in Otford), arising from the continuing attempts by Laing's for a Well Road development, aims to focus on all planning proposals in the village, and to oppose anything it considers inappropriate. Their publicity is very good, and they distribute regular handouts to every house. Their views regarding unwanted development coincide with those of our Society. RADIO Management Committee has said it wishes to reinforce the efforts of the Otford Society, and our response has been an

agreement to liaise over planning concerns. We hope that our combined strength will influence the planning authority more successfully in Otford's favour. RADIO membership is free; we are not able to offer free membership. Our fees, however, are low, the total sum of our subscriptions barely covers the cost of our 3 times a year NEWSLETTER. (Which is why we hope members will also make donations from time to time!) However, as the Treasurer reports, our reserves grow slowly year by year through the sale of walks leaflets, interest on capital and small profits on community activities. 'What do we need money for?', you might ask. Well, it is prudent to have a reserve fund set against a day when we might need a larger fighting fund. When Developers see land devoid of building, their eyes fill with crocodile tears. They quote Government policy on the desperate need for housing in the South East, with density provisions that bring tears to **our** eyes! At present

the Green Belt offers some protection, but how long before this is eroded? The Otford Society believes it has a duty to try to preserve the beauty of our Kent landscape, the character of our village and its open spaces, not just for those who live here now, but for the future, and in the national interest of the identity of our country. The landscape is what makes England. Once destroyed it will be lost for ever. We do not say there can be no development or housebuilding; we **do** say that it must be suitable, sustainable, and appropriate to the infrastructure. RADIO is quite right in seeing imminent danger. The Otford Society has been guardians of our village interests for the past 30 years.

### **SR49**

The application to close the foot crossing across the railway and divert Footpath SR49 is still to be resolved. We understand that DEFRA will be appointing an Inspector to hold an Inquiry this summer. Meanwhile the sudden hooting of approaching trains continues to alarm residents, and no more has been heard of the EU Commission which we believed was looking into new regulations regarding hooter noise pollution.

### **PLANNING**

There may be two new meeting places in Otford by the end of the year, both in or adjoining the Conservation Area. The new Methodist Hall in the High Street is expected to be ready by August. The Parish Church Annexe building work has not yet commenced, but will mean a temporary pathway across The Green to convey materials.

The Society has commented on a number of applications during the year, including Laing's three applications for Well Road. At Frog Farm the old turn-of-the-last-century farmhouse will be demolished to make way for a new building, and approval has been given for some further building. The new complex should improve the look of the area at this western approach to the village. The unsuitable application approved by the SDC for 12 Coombe Road has now been withdrawn, and a

more traditional design in keeping with neighbouring houses has been allowed. A new driveway from Castle House into Bubblestone Road has been permitted, with some conditions. The old coal yard at the rail station has been re-named Becket's Place by Laing's, and the seven large houses built there are now occupied.

### **ACTIVITIES**

The summer Garden Party attracted a very good crowd, held once again in the spacious grounds of Broughton Manor, thanks to the hospitality of Mr and Mrs Brown. The Autumn meeting in the village hall was also well attended, with lively debate. The Society sponsored a successful commemoration of the Trafalgar bi-centenary as part of the SEA BRITAIN year, generating some income for other village groups. The Otford players supported the production and performance of a specially written work TRAFALGAR REMEMBERED\*, aided by the WI Choir and members of the Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society. The WI Art Group held an exhibition of paintings in the Church Hall, and on Trafalgar Day itself four schoolchildren planted two English 'Trafalgar' oaks on the Recreation Ground. The Fete Committee kindly donated £100 towards our costs.

Altogether quite a full year.

*Ken Gunderson*

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We learn, with regret, that Roy Alexander has died, aged 90. He was a founder member and first Chairman of the Otford Society, and a good friend of our village. A tribute will appear in our next edition.

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\* TRAFALGAR REMEMBERED'. A bi-centenary commemoration in words, vision and song. DVD or VCR available from the Heritage Centre. £6.50, £1 donated to Heritage Centre, and £1 to Otford Players from each sale.

## THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT – 2005/2006

According to the Society's records for 2005, there was a slight increase in membership to 1,124, which is the highest figure we have had during this new millennium. The numbers for the previous year was 1,086. These are approximately half of the residences and I feel it is quite an achievement to have such a high level of membership for a village amenity society.

This is due, in no small part, to the hard work of our Liaison Officers, who completed collection of the membership subscriptions, which were then passed to the Treasurer before the end of the year.

Please try and remember to encourage your neighbours to join the Society, especially new residents moving into the area. It is important to maintain the high level of

support we have in the village to add weight to any arguments we wish to put to local authorities on developments affecting our amenities or environment. As you know, it has become increasingly difficult over the past year to influence the SDC planning department against unsuitable development.

We are, once again, short of a couple of Liaison Officers and I would ask for volunteers to help with Warham Road and Telston Lane, both quite small rounds for distribution. There are only three Newsletters to deliver per year, plus collection of the members' subscriptions. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Vincent Tilley*  
*Membership Secretary*  
*Tel: 01959 522491*

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### **'SAINSBURY'S ROUNDABOUT'**

My campaign to have direction arrows painted on the carriageway at Sainsbury's roundabout seems to have faltered for the moment. The mistake in the address of the Sevenoaks Council in the last Newsletter to which support letters should be sent could have meant that the letters sent by members may not have reached the Highways Authority.

To further confuse matters the Department has now moved to an address in Gravesend, see below, and although my last letter was forwarded by Sevenoaks over two months ago nothing has been heard. A recent letter asking for a reply has met with similar silence.

Speaking to members I find that there is a feeling that vehicles using the inner lane to go straight through to Sevenoaks are wrong. This is not so, Clause 162 of the Highway Code states 'approach in the left hand lane' and 'keep in the left hand lane to leave', however 162 stated 'act on all information...traffic signs and lane markings which direct you into the correct lane'. I think this gives some backing for us to press for the left hand lane to be clearly marked as the approach to the supermarket area. There are many instances of Clause 160 being over-ruled by markings on the road and a good example is the roundabout south of Tonbridge where traffic for Brook Street has clear arrows on the inner lane while the right hand lane is for straight through to the Town.

If you have been 'cut up' and feel that this is a worthy cause, please write to: The Manager, The Highways Authority for Sevenoaks, Kent County Council, Joynes House, New Road, Gravesend, Kent. DA11 0AT.

*Andrew Barber*

If we can get enough letters in, we may be able to stir the Highways Authority into action. A simple matter of painted road signing would remove a major irritation and confusion. Please support Andrew by writing. – Ed

**THE OTFORD SOCIETY**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2005**

<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
Subscriptions and Donations	1877.00	2070
Interest received	605.19	500
Surplus on Garden Party	116.60	54
Surplus on St George's Day Dinner	126.00	68
Surplus on Trafalgar Remembered	116.65	–
Receipt from Raffle	94.00	85
Village Fete	–	47
Sale of Leaflets	379.64	491
	<u>£3315.08</u>	<u>£3315</u>
Newsletters	962.00	596
Subscriptions	290.00	215
Administration and Insurance	333.00	350
Photocopying and Sundries	51.15	120
Cost of Leaflets	568.00	124
Donation to Benevolent Society	94.00	85
	<u>£2298.15</u>	<u>£1490</u>
<b>EXCESS of income over expenditure for the year</b>	<u>£1016.93</u>	<u>£1825</u>

**THE OTFORD SOCIETY**  
**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2005**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
Accumulated Funds as at 1st January 2005	17901.74	16077
Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year	1016.93	1825
	<u>18918.67</u>	<u>17902</u>
Accumulated Fund	13365.13	12348
Pond Appeal	<u>5553.54</u>	<u>5554</u>
	18918.67	17902
Represented by:		
National Savings Account	17170.42	16590
Building Society Account	1737.31	1303
Cash in hand	10.94	9
	<u>£18918.67</u>	<u>£17902</u>

.....Hon. Treasurer  
A.J.A. COOK

**ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT**

I have examined the above accounts for the year ended 31st December 2005, from the books and records, and from the information and explanations supplied to me, and certify they are in accordance therewith.

14 Hillydeal Road, Otford, Kent.TN14 5RU.

Derek M. Baxter FCCA

# OTFORD MATTERS: PLANNING

64 and 66 Well Road. The Inquiry into Laing's appeal against refusal was held on the 22nd and 23rd November. Although the Inspector dismissed the three appeals for 17, 9 and 21 houses, residents have been somewhat alarmed at her conclusions: She rejected that traffic, sewerage and water problems or noise from the railway were sufficient factors to influence the decision. Although dismissing the appeal, she concluded that 'residential development on the appeal site would be appropriate' and would 'cause no significant harm to the living conditions of adjacent residents. This does not however outweigh the harm that would arise from the inefficient use of land in these cases.' (This for the 17 and 9 houses application.) In the case of the 21 houses, she concluded that although the proposals 'would meet the density policy objective' living conditions would be harmed for the residents of 62a. She refused permission for the demolition of existing dwellings and construction of 21 houses in this case.

The Inspector's comments on density are particularly worrying. Is she saying that she would have approved a scheme with a higher density of dwellings? And is she aware that Otford is not an Urban area, but RURAL?

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## *Dates for your Diary*

**6th April. Otford Society AGM, 8pm, Memorial Hall.**

**Speaker: Louise Shrubsole, Energy Conservation Officer, SDC**

Global warming is having an effect on our climate. As part of the Sevenoaks Rural Energy Focus, Ms Shrubsole will be telling us how heat can be conserved and money saved, and about grants that are available.

**18th April. Best Village judging. 2.30pm-4.40pm**

As a past winner of Best Village Award, Otford is entered for a competition with other winners for 'The Best of the Best'. Otford Society members can play their part in the 'Keep Otford Tidy' campaign by making sure their own patch is litter-free. Why not give your road name sign a wash, or any other road sign near you, just to sparkle things up?

**23rd April. St George's Day/Shakespeare's Birthday (Sunday)**

The Otford Society will be continuing its traditional celebration of this event. The Church Hall is booked for English cream teas (afternoon) and there will be the usual toast to St George and tributes to the Bard. Watch notice boards and local press for times and cost. Proceeds will be shared with local charities.

**Otford Gardeners' Society**

**2nd May** Alpines of Chile. Dr J. Hughes. Illustrated talk.

**6th June** Portuguese Gardens up to the 18th century. Diedre Hall. Illustrated talk. 8pm Memorial Hall.

**24th June** Rose & Summer Show. 2.15pm

**14th May** **St Bartholomew's Parish Church**

Otford Celebration Service. 9.30am, followed by refreshments. All invited.

**29th May** **Otford Village Fete. 2006 theme is Books**

Procession leaves Hale Lane at 12.15pm. Visit the Society stall.

**4th June** **St Bartholomew's Parish Church.**

United Songs of Praise. 6.30pm, followed by refreshments.

**Reminder:** Throughout April/May there is an Otford Society-sponsored Appeal for the Play and Recreation Areas Project. Your money will go to help children to have fun in safe areas. Any excess money subscribed will go to equipment for disabled children. Please give generously, £14,000 is needed. Cheques made out to Otford Society can be sent to or left at the Parish Rooms in the High Street.

# OTFORD PLAY AND RECREATIONAL AREAS PROJECT APPEAL

The play areas for children on the Recreation Ground and at Hale Lane need refurbishing, and activity equipment replaced. The Parish Council has produced a plan that would completely upgrade these areas, with some equipment that can be used by disabled as well as able-bodied children.

This will cost money, quite a lot of money. In fact, £69,250. An 80% grant is available from DEFRA, but only on the condition that the remainder (£13,850) is contributed from the community, and not from public sector sources, such as the Local Council.

The completed project would provide a wonderful family facility for young people of this area. Using playgrounds and sharing the joy of it is part of growing up, and it would be a dull place indeed that did not provide this pleasurable activity for youngsters.

There are many calls on your money, I know, but this is an opportunity to do something positive for our own children in our own village. You, and your children of whatever age they are now, will almost certainly have memories of happy times spent at 'the swings'. Let us not deny the next generation a similar chance of happy memories.

A donation of any value would be welcome, but we do ask you to DO IT NOW, as we need to raise a good part of the community's share by May 31st to qualify for the 2006 grants. Every £1 you give will be worth nearly £5 in grants.

Cheques should be made payable to The Otford Society and can be sent or delivered to Otford Parish Council, The School House, 21 High Street, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 5PG, or left at Hubert's Stores, Telston Lane.

Any excess money raised will go towards equipment for disabled children.

Thank you for your support,

*Ken Gunderson*

*Next Otford Society Newsletter - Summer*

*Newsletter Editor: Ken Gunderson 522709, 37 Knighton Road, TN14 5LD*

*Newsletter Distribution: Andrew Barber 523550*

*Membership Secretary: Vincent Tilley 522491*

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I enclose a cheque made payable to The Otford Society for the Play and Recreation Area project.

(signed) .....

Organisation or Society (if applicable) .....