



# The Otford Society NewsLetter

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of Amenity Societies

**MARCH 2008**

**Notice is given of the  
OTFORD SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
to be held on**

**Thursday 17th April 2008 at 8.00pm in Otford Village Memorial Hall.**

All members are invited to attend. The meeting is open to all interested in matters concerning our village. The speakers will be Nick Johnansen, Chairman of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Minutes of the 2007 AGM and the detailed financial report for 2007-8 will be available at the meeting.

Nominations for the Committee can be made on the night, or in advance, providing they have the permission of the nominee and a seconder.

Chairman:	Tony Wiltshire 524887
Vice-Chair & Treasurer:	Alf Cook
Secretary:	Carol Griffiths 523140
Membership Secretary	Vincent Tilley 522491
Newsletter Distribution & Leaflets:	Andrew Barber
Roads/Traffic	Jeff Lee
Derek Buck, Dennis Glasspool, Andrea Pinto, Richard McDowell	
RADIO liaison	

## **TRAFFIC MATTERS !**

**It certainly does, to the villagers of Otford.**

We are really grateful to all those residents who responded to the road safety survey: ticking boxes, adding notes, making suggestions as to what could be done where and why, pointing out particular risks and hazards, and describing experiences trying to cross village roads, avoid traffic splash and get home safely in the dark. And thank you to RADIO and local shops for helping with delivery and collection. A few of your fellow members have worked hard to pull together everything (and we mean everything) that you said.

You'll be delighted to know that we have greater respect for the trees of the planet than to churn out more paper. A comprehensive report on the findings has now been submitted by email to the Otford Society Committee for their consideration. Once it has been agreed, a copy will be placed on the village website for you to access if you wish. Some printed copies will be produced for the library, the Parish Council and others.

So what are some of the big messages?

- 92% (274 out of the 299 households that responded) are worried about the **speed of traffic** through the village;
- 82% are concerned on behalf of **vulnerable people**: the elderly, disabled, and children;
- 29% list a whole range of **danger spots**;
- 66% think **Pilgrims Way East** is the most dangerous road, with the other roads listed close behind;
- 87% say **traffic speeds** made these roads dangerous, but it is this combined with **narrow roads and narrow or missing footways** which matters to many;
- Views on **traffic controls** (signs etc.) are mixed, but some very imaginative ideas emerged; 23% say vehicle activated signs will help, and others mention features such as road narrowing, gateways, mini-roundabouts, and rumble strips to keep speeds down;
- 71% want **speed limits** changed in some way, with 64% suggesting 20 mph in the High Street. A common comment is that 30 mph is acceptable in the village as long as it is observed and enforced;
- 59% say more **pedestrian crossings** are needed (especially in Sevenoaks Road by the parade of shops);
- 66% say they would use an 'Otford 30' **sticker** in their cars.

This survey is about people's views and concerns. To respond to them and reduce the risk levels, some firm statistics on traffic volume and speed will be needed for a start. Not everything is easy. If we want new or wider footways, or speed control features installed, land and the correct locations will have to be found for them. And highway authorities seem to have to act only when there are sufficient (!) incidents involving fatalities or serious injuries. We don't need any more of those, thank you. We know we must be careful as we move round the village roads, but surely we should not have to go in fear of injury or worse.

So now it's time for action. Doing nothing is not an option. We want the authorities to read our survey and take things forward. You can help by asking your local 'patch' parish councillors if they have read the report and what they are going to do about it. There are already welcome signs that the parish council is looking hard at one or two key locations in the village, with a view to managing traffic flow and speeds better and making life safer for pedestrians. In future the answer may lie in some radical thinking of the village layout, or in the concept of shared space. Some recent publications by English Heritage and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty unit offer interesting ideas, reflected in our own soon-to-be-published Village Design statement.

**Village life cannot continue to be at the mercy of road traffic. Of course traffic matters: and now it must matter more to those who have the power to improve things.**

Jeff Lee  
March 2008

# CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

## April 2008

'Oh to be in Otford, now that Spring is here!' Spring certainly has sprung early this year, if this is determined by the numerous clusters of daffodils everywhere you look. (I learnt only recently that the other name for the daffodil is the LENTEN LILY.) Snowdrops and crocuses are in abundance and already some trees have a green tinge around them.

As always, Otford is alive with activity. From every kind of sport, dancing and quiz nights, the residents of our village have considerable choice as to how they spend their time. I hope the annual report reflects this vibrancy as I look back over past events.

In order to celebrate St George's Day last April, we had to step outside the village in order to locate a suitable venue. We found such a place at the Rose & Crown, Dunton Green. We were in the main restaurant, which is like a conservatory with glass all around the diners. It was a happy lunch-time with a good choice of food and drink, poetry readings and lively conversation. We made the traditional toasts and departed for home in the late afternoon.

In this country, the weather can ruin the most carefully planned events. The day of the Village Fete saw some of the most horrendous weather ever associated with this event. From the very outset in the morning, strong winds and driving rain compelled most stalls to come into the hall, with only a brave few left to hold their stalls outside. The theme for the 2007 Fete was WATER! Yes - WATER! Fortunately our stall was placed inside, just in front of a radiator! Some of the committee members

helped on the stall and we sold everything. We owe Carol Griffiths a big thank you: she was the driving force behind our effort and it was a great success.

The Annual Garden Party was again held in the MacDowall's garden, and many thanks to them. It was now June, but again, during the day ominous clouds and rain were everywhere. By the afternoon, they cleared and there were two or three hours of sunshine and we were able to proceed with confidence. It was an excellent gathering and everyone enjoyed the occasion. Also in June, some of us helped Rod Shelton mount a public open evening, publishing issues raised by the V.D.S. (Village Design Statement). This meeting went well: not only was it enjoyable, but also it enabled us to openly discuss key issues affecting Otford. The V.D.S. has now been completed and will soon be available to residents. Many thanks to Rod Shelton for keeping this important study on course.

The Remembrance Day Service and laying of wreaths went very smoothly. Alf Cook laid the Otford Society wreath on our behalf. The morning was fine and sunny and there was a good attendance.

In December, a group of stalwart Otford Society members gathered at the Sevenoaks Quarry. We met the manager who took us around, on foot, to see where part of the footpath was to be re-routed. Generally speaking we felt the changes were acceptable, although one or two people felt that an ancient pathway was being interfered with. In the future, about twenty years hence, this whole area will be a lovely natural park.

Also in December, we were once again faced with another appeal by Wimpey South East concerning development in Well Road. S.D.C. disappointed us by allowing this development to go through. At this point in time, RADIO, supported by the Otford Society, are seeking other means of tackling this problem.

About two years ago, I raised the issue of hedges v fences: the need wherever possible to preserve hedges. Looking

around, it seems to me that more close-board fencing has appeared in the village. Remember – birds cannot nest in fences! We are a rural village, not a suburban area.

Finally, a letter of condolence has been sent to Sally Wöstmann's family. Sally made a great contribution to the community life of Otford. Her thoughtful and caring nature was an example to us all.

Tony Wiltshire

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## **THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT 2007/2008**

In 2007 we again had a slight increase in the Society's membership from 1,159 to 1,166. Although this amounts to only seven extra, it means we are maintaining our high level of membership, with members present in 677 of the dwellings in the village. What a great achievement for a village amenity society. For this we are indebted to the efforts of our Liaison Officers, who deliver your newsletters and collect the membership subscriptions. I thank them and also you, our members, for your support, especially in this day and age of so many conflicting interests.

Please do 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 arguments we wish to put to local authorities on developments affecting our amenities and environment. This is particularly important at this time, with the development pressures from the government on the South East. As you well know there are a number of contentious issues at present and we need the weight of the membership behind the society in influencing any damaging proposals.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, we are still short of Liaison Officers. So I am asking for volunteers to help with Warham Road, The Green, Station Road and The Charne. There are only three Newsletters to deliver per year, plus collection of the members' subscriptions. I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help.

Vincent Tilley  
Membership Secretary  
Tel: 01959 522491

## **TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT: Summary**

The Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2007 show a surplus of £993.51. The main source of income is the members' subscriptions, and the sale of Walks Leaflets.

During the year, the Society made a donation of £100 towards the Village Design Statement. The sum of £1,027.55 was recovered from Customs and Revenue in respect of the Children's Play Area Appeal. This amount was subsequently paid over to the Parish Council.

The total Accumulated Funds of the Society now stand at £14,456.77.

Copies of the Annual Accounts of the Society will be available at the Annual General Meeting.

A.J.A. Cook  
Hon Treasurer

## **IN MEMORIAM**

### **MR REG LYTHABY**

Reg Lythaby, Chairman of Otford Parish Council through eight eventful years, died just before Christmas. He was 84. He had lived in Otford for half a century. Family, neighbours and former colleagues crowded the Parish Church on the 31st January to remember his life, and the work he did on behalf of the community. They heard a friend and former Parish Councillor, David Prestage, pay warm tribute to his skills as Chairman, always polite and calm, giving offence to none.

Mr Prestage recalled Reg's devoted and unstinting labours on behalf of the village for which he cared. It was in 1974 that Reg succeeded the long serving Frank Weston as Chairman of the Parish Council, and remained in that capacity until 1982. One of his first major problems was the Inquiry into the proposed route of the M25 motorway. Pressure groups to save the Darent Valley received massive local and national support, and with this backing Reg led the successful campaign to build the bund, close to Pilot Wood, which acts as a sound and sight barrier.

A senior partner in a firm of solicitors, with a branch office in Otford, he helped many residents with their problems. He served for some years as Chairman of the Governors of Otford C.P. School, and was always ready with kind and helpful advice for children who wished to prepare projects.

Many in Otford will remember his wise counselling. Here was a man who gave up so much of his time and energy in the service of the village he loved. That will be his abiding memory.

K.L.G.

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### **MRS SALLY WÖSTMANN**

Her family, and Otford, have lost one of our real treasures in the unexpected and untimely death of Sally, who has been at the forefront of the Parish Church and community for over thirty years. She served for many years as Churchwarden and enthusiastic organiser and fundraiser, using her many talents, not the least in cooking and preserves.

Friendliness, sincerity, cheerfulness and trustworthiness are some of the many qualities for which we shall remember this lovely, vibrant lady with great affection.

C.P.W.

A memorial service conducted by Rev. Pat Hopkins, will be held in the Parish Church on 22nd March at 2.30pm.

# OTFORD MATTERS

We may not have reached the end of the **64/66 Well Road** development saga. The application was allowed apparently because the SDC Development Control Committee were unable to face the costs should there be yet another appeal. RADIO (residents against developments in Otford) are looking into the possibility of challenging the decision in the Courts. Public opinion against the plan was so strong there should be no lack of support, but developers seem to have endless resources to get their own way.

Land near the **Chalk Pit**, close to the rail station, which was sold by the KCC for a high price, is another area where building applications can be expected.

A Public Inquiry is to be held on 26th March on the application to build a house in the garden of **17 Greenhill Road**, and the rejected three new houses in **Hillydeal**, also the subject of an appeal, may go to an Inquiry.

An application to open a 12 feet wide trackway to give vehicles access from **Pilgrims Way East** to houses near the top of the Mount (usual access via Coombe Road) has brought protests from the Parish Council, the Otford Society, the District Historical Society and others. The ownership of some of the land involved is not clear. What is certain is that the path to be widened has been in use solely as a footpath for over fifty years, and that it is part of the historic **North Downs Way** from Winchester to Canterbury, used by many walkers and ramblers. Of great concern is that the proposed track would emerge on a steep course into the narrow confines of Pilgrims Way East, causing yet another traffic hazard along that difficult and busy road.

The flower troughs in the village, maintained by the OPC, Russell House School, shopkeepers and others, have been a particular delight in the past year. Congratulations to all who have helped to enhance the centre of our village.

K.L.G.

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## *Dates for your Diary*

22nd March	St Bart's Parish Church. Memorial service for Sally Wöstmann, 2.30pm.
17th April	Otford Society AGM, 8pm, Memorial Hall.
18th May	St Bart's Parish Church. Civic Service, 9.30am.
23rd April	St George's Day/Shakespeare birthday annual lunch, 12.45pm.
26th May	Annual Village Fete. Theme – 'That's Entertainment'.
21st June	St Bartholomew's Fair, Castle House, 2pm.
19th July	Allotments Open Day, 10am-4pm.

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### **St George's Day/Shakespeare's birthday annual lunch**

This celebration will be held at the Rose & Crown, London Road, Dunton Green on 23rd April at 12.45pm.

£19.50 per person. Includes glass of red wine and 10% service charge.

Please book early. Maximum number 50. Ring Ken Gunderson 522709.

Come and join in the commemoration of England's patron saint and national bard.

Cheques payable to Otford Society.



# THE ROLE OF THE PCSO

## *Otford Society committee member explains the duties*

Firstly, Neighbourhood Policing is about the Police, outside agencies and the public working closely together to solve local problems, including crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the local community.

The ultimate aim of neighbourhood policing is to increase public confidence by responding to the issues that affect any particular community and thereby reduce the fear of crime. (End of Commercial!)

### **So, where do the PCSOs play their part?**

Let me give you some background ...

Originally, the PCSO role was the brainchild of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, following public concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and quality of life issues and the desire to see hi-visible police presence on our streets.

With the support of the Home Secretary of the day, David Blunkett, and with the aid of legislation, the Police Reform Act 2002, the position of the PCSO was evolved.

Their aim is help reduce:

- Incidents of crime
- Criminal damage
- The fear of crime

May I say at this point that PCSOs are not replacement Police Officers ... they are there to address some of the tasks that do not require the experience OR powers held by regular Police Officers which therefore allows those officers to attend and deal with more appropriate duties.

The PCSO role complements and supports regular Police Officers by provide a visible and accessible uniform presence, so increasing greater public awareness and assurance.

We are civilian support staff, employed and trained by Kent Police.

Currently there are 23 PCSOs in the Sevenoaks District.

### **Well ... WHAT DO WE DO?**

Our primary purpose, as I have already mentioned, is to:

- Improve the community and create a greater public re-assurance.
- Support regular Police Officers.
- Tackle low-level crime.
- Work with partner agencies and community organisations.
- Visit victims of crime.
- Provide crime prevention advice.

In addition, other factors that affect the quality of people's lives, for example:

- Reporting vandalism or criminal damage.
- Reporting suspicious activities.
- Deterring juvenile nuisance
- Neighbour disputes

*to be continued*

Dennis Glasspool



## **Butterflies and Bugs Area**

A suitable area has been selected and agreed with Elizabeth Ward, Parish Council Environment Officer. We are now awaiting written permission from English Heritage. Work in clearing and preparing the area for planting should take place in April – offers of help welcome. We hope that the shrubs and plants will be in place by the May Bank Holiday.

Carol Griffiths

# END OF AN ERA

Fifty years ago there were ten shops in Otford High Street selling food, including two bakers and two butchers. They have been closing one by one for a long time.

Copus the butcher was the lone survivor. When he closed his doors for business on 22nd March, it marked the end of an era for village stores. Remember how meeting in the village shop was a social happening, a chance to acquire and exchange news and give friendly greetings? Although this is still possible in the neighbourhood superstores, somehow with the bustle of trolleys in the aisles it just isn't the same. The loss of shops such as Copus, Lowrie's and Marchant's has altered the character of village life. They helped to create a sense of identity which has now vanished for ever.



Apart from One Stop, in the Parade, one small shop remains – 'Yvonne's Convenience Store' (formerly Telston Stores) providing a service for young mums and the elderly in that area

Carol Griffiths writes: There has been a butcher's shop on the corner of Pickmoss Lane for about a hundred years. Purpose built in 1907/8, it still has the original tiles on the walls of the shop. The back yard was for slaughter, but it is about eighty years since it has been used for that purpose. There have been several owners, and Paul Copus worked for Jim Danslow for ten years before taking over the business in 1984. One of the main reasons for closing is that Paul's assistant, Jason, is emigrating to Japan, and Paul felt it would be very hard to replace him. His shop in Borough Green will remain open, and there will be a delivery service for Otford residents. He will continue to supply meat for the weekly Luncheon Club in the village hall.



*Next Otford Society Newsletter - Summer 2008*

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