



The Otford Society NewsLetter

Registered with the Civic Trust
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and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies

www.otford.info/otfordsociety

JUNE 2009



Summer Garden Party
On
Saturday June 27 2009
at



Broughton Manor, High St Otford
By kind permission of Carol & Dennis Brown
6.00pm - 8.00pm



Tickets £5.00

Carol Griffiths
01959 523140



OTFORD ON SHOW

Saturday 16 May turned out to be an exciting and informative day in the village calendar. The village hall was adorned with balloons, bunting, posters, pictures and many other decorative items. The official title of the day was OTFORD SHOWCASE – part of the Parish Plan initiative. The aim of the day is to encourage a wider sense of community involvement within the parish. There about 30 tables, each one representing a society, club, association or sport. The Otford Society with RADIO had its own table and during the day, many people visited our table, asked questions and left with membership forms.

As I write this, it crosses my mind that we cannot take all this for granted. All these activities are reliant on individuals giving freely of their time and energy – usually on a voluntary basis. When I look back, I recall clearly the faces of people who organised groups and activities that I belonged to, particularly as a young man.

In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find people willing to run activities, or sit on committees – goodwill is harder to find these days ! Otford clearly runs against the trend – we are teeming with voluntary organisations.

OTFORD ON SHOW (cont)

Recently it was brought to the Society's attention that we don't make enough effort to attract younger members, particularly those with young children. We are determined over the next year to put this right. We are keen for the Otford Society to represent all age groups. Those of us who have families remember only too well how difficult it can be to get out to meetings, particularly in the evenings.

We have to check our insurance cover (*elf and safety!*) before we can open the Summer Garden Party to residents with children. But next year we will be aiming to encourage families with children to join us.

By the time you read this article we will be in the month of June. At the moment the high winds persist, heavy rain is falling, and, of course, the ubiquitous cloud cover is over us.

Dare I say – have an enjoyable SUNNY summer, cloud free and warm, filled with bright blooms and busy butterflies.

Enjoy the Season !

A.V. Wiltshire
Chairman

A CRACKER OF A SHOWCASE

On Saturday 16th May, 32 Otford clubs and associations gathered to provide a showcase of opportunities for residents. Crowded into the main Memorial Hall under bunting and balloons, the show was visited by a large number of residents from all over the parish. With more clubs than almost any other village in the county, Otford can feel proud of the warmth of its friendly community. It was a positive success for many of the clubs who gained new membership. The event was part of the Parish Plan initiative to help find opportunities to bring the community together.



Rod Shelton

The Next Question is ...

The Steering Committee of the Otford Parish Plan held a drop-in event on 18th April, where residents could study the proposed Parish Plan questionnaires at leisure and add their own ideas for additional questions. There are three documents which will be hand-delivered to every home in the parish in June – the main questionnaire, a smaller questionnaire for young members of the household, and a third questionnaire addressing concerns felt by the older residents. Over 130 residents attended the event and a very large proportion of their proposals have been included. The steering committee have now completed the final drafts of the questionnaires. From the results, the Parish Plan committee hope to gain a clear picture of what issues the residents of Otford feel in need of addressing. That then will form the basis of the planning process.

Rod Shelton

Oxford Afternoon WI 90th Birthday

Oxford Afternoon WI commemorated its 90th birthday with a celebration lunch on Tuesday 2 March 2009.

The group was officially formed on 1 January 1919. Over the years it has done many things in the village, particularly during the war, making hundreds of pots of jam and assisting in many other ways. They have numerous scrap books portraying their

varied activities and have in the past won competitions for drama, choirs and arts and crafts.

Since 1948 members have enjoyed the 'Denman Experience'. Denman is the WI College in Oxfordshire, where one-day and four-day courses are held on countless subjects ranging from cookery, choral conducting to car maintenance – public speaking, Spanish conversation, yoga, literature & art - to name but a few.

The village fete has always been enthusiastically supported by the WI, both with ambitious floats in the procession and an inviting stall.

Current projects include teaching young mum's to knit and a 'Let's Cook' scheme to help young people to cook economically.



Elizabeth Ward

HOSPICES OF HOPE

At the recent AGM we were pleased to welcome Barry Smith of Hospices of Hope as our guest speaker.

The Hospices of Hope, formerly The Ellenor, Tea Rooms in the High Street have been well known to many in the village (and others from much further afield) for a quite a few years.

The more observant will also have noticed their antiques shop opposite which opened about a year ago. However, how many of us realised that Oxford has been their centre of operations and the place where their headquarters is located for the past 12 years? How many of us even knew exactly what the charity did? Thanks to a most enjoyable and interesting talk, those who were at the meeting found out.

The charity was founded during the aftermath of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Following a visit to Brasov in Romania by its founder Graham Perolls (who also founded the Ellenor Hospice in Dartford) a special appeal was raised through the Ellenor Hospice. The result, in 1992, was the foundation of the very first hospice service in the whole of Southeastern Europe. Since then the organisation and its influence has grown greatly and now includes hospices in Brasov and Bucharest, Romania; Belgrade in Serbia and Chisinau, the capital of Moldova. Plans are also in place to commence activities in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro when the economic environment allows.

Although Hospices of Hope and The Ellenor Hospice began to concentrate on their individual areas some years ago they both continue to follow the same concept of providing care to terminally ill people in an holistic way, combining excellent medical care with emotional and spiritual support for the patient and their families. Many thousands of adults and children who would otherwise have had no one to turn to have received care and support from the hospices over the years, allowing them not only to die free from pain but to actually live each one of their remaining days.



hospicesofhope
making every day count

Although the hospices overseas are moving towards self-sustainability the charity still has a great deal to do. Their ultimate aim is to ensure that quality end-of-life care is accessible to every person in Southeastern Europe. To this end they will continue sponsoring the training of medical professionals in the region and piloting special projects such as the Rural Project, which creates small home-visiting teams in the more remote rural areas of the Balkans, and eventually building a second in-patient teaching hospice, this time in Bucharest.

With two of their 14 retail outlets and the Head Office located in the village Otford will continue to be at the centre of this pioneering work for years to come.

OTFORD HERITAGE CENTRE

A New Link with Kent's Darkest Days

For nearly 500 years the silver penny was virtually the sole denomination of currency in Anglo Saxon England.

A coin minted by an early archbishop of Canterbury has recently been discovered locally. The hammered silver penny bears on one side the legend, 'Aethelheard Episcopi' and on the other, 'Offa Rex' and was minted in 792-3. Aethelheard (or Aethelhard) reigned as Archbishop from 792 until his death in 805, turbulent times in Kent. His predecessor was Jaenberht (766-791) who supported the last independent Kings of Kent. In his reign King Offa of Mercia fought Egbert, King of Kent, a great leader, at the first battle of Otford (776) – the year 'a fiery cross appeared in the heavens after sunset'. The outcome of the battle, which was probably fought on the lower slopes of Otford Mount, is not recorded, but the fact that the Kings' of Kent continued to issue their own laws for the next decade, clearly indicates that Egbert won.

However Offa, he of Offa's Dyke fame, was intent on expanding his sphere of influence and after a long hard-fought campaign against Kent, by 784 had defeated the Kentish army under Egbert's son, Ealhmund, who was probably killed – though his son, also called Egbert, escaped to Wessex. From 785 Offa exacted a terrible vengeance on the Cantware but was unable to dispossess Jaenberht. Instead he marked his vindictiveness to the Archbishop by prevailing on Pope Hadrian to divide the province of Canterbury by establishing a new Archbishop at Lichfield, to prevent ecclesiastical 'interference' in the Mercian kingdom by a Kentish Churchman. He also confiscated church lands at Charing, Great Chart and Bishopsbourne and gave them to his followers. Jaenberht died in 792 and was buried in St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury.

Offa persuaded the Pope to appoint Aethelhard, Abbot of the monastery of Louth, Lincolnshire, a man loyal to Mercia, to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. He reigned until 805. At the end of 795 the Cantware had risen in rebellion under Eadberht Praen (probably a priest of royal blood). Aethelhard had been imposed on Canterbury and when the insurrection erupted – he fled the country.

Eadberht renounced his priesthood and was installed as King in Canterbury. Offa died in 796, to be succeeded by Cenulf, another Mercian, whose hatred of the Kentish people led to an horrific campaign of retribution and slaughter throughout Kent. It was described succinctly in a contemporary account 'Cenulf, King of the Mercians, invaded the province of the people of Kent with the whole strength of his army, and mightily devastated with a grievous pillaging almost to its utter destruction'. Eadberht Praen was hunted down, enslaved and mutilated. After some 300 years, this unsuccessful rebellion marked the end of Kent as an independent kingdom.

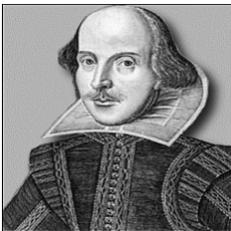
Aethelhard was restored to the see of Canterbury by Cenulf in 798, but his power was diminished. In 801 he visited Rome, but on his return relations with the king did not improve,

although the Pope had confirmed his authority over all the churches formerly in the see, hence he reclaimed Lichfield. He died on 12 May 805, to be succeeded by Wulfred, a Kentish nobleman, previously Archdeacon of Canterbury, 'a most wise man' who in defending the church's interests alienated Cenulf. Mercia briefly subsumed Kent, but was soon defeated by Wessex, whose ruling family had its roots in Kent, the younger Egbert becoming king. Kent subsequently assumed a major role in a unified (southern) England in time to resist the marauding Danes in the next century.

It is unclear why, at the end of his life, Cenulf gave the royal estate at Otford to Christchurch, Canterbury - the seat of the archbishops. However, he did so and in 821 Wulfred became our first archiepiscopal landlord, the first of 56 in the succeeding 716 years.

Cliff Ward

St George's Day and Shakespeare's birthday Celebration Supper



A supper was held on 23 April 2009 to celebrate St George's Day and Shakespeare's birthday. There was also entertainment in the form of a choir, a folk singer and 'An English Journey' - a historical wander through England illustrated with slides.

The food was delicious, the folk singer sang with gusto and encouraged audience participation – which they did with enthusiasm and the choir performed their madrigals beautifully, with Tony Wiltshire conducting.

'An English Journey', written and narrated by Ken Gunderson, was a leisurely wander through the English countryside, with a historical theme, was beautifully illustrated with slides provided by David Prestage.

The evening concluded with everyone joining in a toast to St George and Shakespeare and a rousing chorus of 'Rose of England'.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening and many thanks must go to Ken Gunderson for all his hard work. Also thanks to the choir, the caterers and all the people who helped to make the evening a resounding success.

KM correspondent

My name is Danielle Staples and I am the KM village correspondent for Otford. If you know of any special events, fetes, school news, football cricket, charity events or tournaments – please let me know on 01732 521709 or email danielle.staples@hotmail.co.uk. I need information by Sunday 6pm so it can be published the following Friday.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Members of the Otford Society Committee attended the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 18 May 2009. A report of the meeting will be available on the Otford website by the middle of June.

The Village in Summer

This is the season of summer events. The grand ancestral houses are fully open and announcing special attractions. In Otford itself we've had the annual fete on May 25th with its parade of festooned vehicles. Both my daughters were attendants to the Miss Otford in the distant past.

Otford and other villages pay good money for air displays. In the past Shoreham fete boasted a steamroller, convertible to a steam tractor, and a steam car, both enthusiasms of David Rushton who lives in Shoreham village high street. I am told the steam tractor is at present languishing in an engineering repair workshop in Hampshire.

For me however, the quintessential summer event is the game of cricket. As I have written before, Otford itself has a beautiful ground, the square looked after by the professional Justin Carr and the outfield by David Knell, and there are so many beautiful, historic cricket grounds in Kent County Village League in which we play. Some grounds date back to the early 1700s.

But it is Eynsford CC which evokes especially the thoughts of summer attractions. On a warm spring or summer day, there are children paddling in the river as you crawl over the hump back bridge before turning into the bumpy drive to the Eynsford pavilion itself. There will be picnickers in the longer grass on the river-side boundary, others enjoying ice-creams.

Batsmen regularly hit fours or sixes into the river. When this happens a net is produced to recover the soaked ball. Bowlers handle it with distaste.

The cricket is not too bad either. Eynsford were national nPower village finalists – out of 450 competitors for the title only four years ago. They did not win, but then they played at Lords. You cannot have everything.

John Lewis

An Odd Odour

Have you noticed an unpleasant sulphur type smell, either outside your own house, anywhere in Otford or as you drive over the M26 to Sevenoaks?

No – it's not your catalytic converter !

We need to track it down.

Please ring - The Environment Agency Incidents Communication Services on 0800 80 70 60 quoting reference 678524

Barbara Darby (Video)

M25 Junction 5 Slips and village roads

The J5.SLIPS.ORG is a group of councillors and residents from communities along the A25, lobbying for east-facing slip roads at Junction 5 of the M25 (see last Newsletter) The aim is to remove heavy vehicles and through traffic from the A25. Otford would benefit hugely from this.

Cllr John Edwards-Winser now represents Otford on that group, and the lobbying process has reached parliamentary level via an A21 Reference Group which includes our MP, Michael Fallon. See J5.org.uk for full information.

AND: please look and read about our village roads at :-

www.otford.info/otfordsociety/road-signage-in-otford.pdf and
www.otford.info/gallery/index.php?cat=23

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 20 June	St Bartholomew's Church Fair 2 pm Castle House
Sunday 7 June	Civic Service 10 am St Bartholomew's Church
Thursday 15 October	Otford Society Autumn Meeting 8pm Otford Village Memorial Hall

In the Steps of Samuel Palmer cont

Another attractive walk to a pub is from the top of Otford Mount. It involves walking down Row Dow for about 100 yards and then turning left, over a stile on to a path alongside the grandly named Row Dow Reservoir. In spring you walk through waves of bluebells. The path takes you across the side of the hill above Otford, with good views, to the drive of what is now called Otford Manor, a Christian retreat which also runs foreign holidays. Locals used – perhaps still do – know it as Treacle Towers, the former home of Mr Lyle, the sugar magnate.

The drive was once home to a flock of long-tailed tits. A short walk down the drive and you will find a stile and path going left above the manor, across a field, through a wood, to the road at Cotman's Ash and the Rising Sun. An alternative is to continue on the path on the side of the hill and under the manor before turning sharply left to join another path. Some 40 years ago, the Rising Sun was a tiny pub – the size of a modest dining room, with a parrot talking away in the corner. Since then it has been added to substantially. It is a lovely place to have a drink outside on a sunny day.

One year I made the mistake of walking there when there were several inches of snow on the ground, dreaming of the roaring fire and beer I was going to enjoy. It was closed. The publican, quite reasonably, had decided no one was going to come in such bad weather.

I must also mention Underriver. As comparatively recent research has shown, Palmer and Linnell painted and drew here too. I imagine it is still possible, by using lanes and paths, to reach Styants Wood across the A25 and pick up a path alongside a series of fish ponds, the history of which is vague, to reach Ightham Mote. A simpler way of exploring the ridge is to take a car to One Tree Hill and walk in the opposite direction to Rooks Hill, Shingle Hill and Wilmot Hill, picking up the Greensand Way to just below the Mote entrance.

The ridge gives you fine views to the Weald and, perhaps on a fine day, the South Downs. Shoreham is in Palmer's Valley of Vision. The Underriver area he painted has been called his Golden Valley.

You will find it well worth treading in the footsteps of Palmer, though perhaps not at night or after visiting the Pig and Whistle! Last year (2008) the Shoreham Society held a light-hearted 're-opening' of the pub, carrying their own barrel of beer to the site to enliven proceedings. But it was for one night only.

John Lewis

IN MEMORIAM

Betty Kent

Betty Kent (nee Townsley) was born in Dartford on 14 January 1920. Her parents were teachers and the family moved first to Fyfield and then to Great Leighs, Essex. At that stage two closely-related things had already become very clear: Betty loved the open air and she was deeply committed to the Guide movement.

Betty left school at 16, passed the Civil Service examination and, while working for Customs and Excise in London, she moved to Bexleyheath. In May 1939 Betty, then a Ranger Guide, heard that a local Cub pack needed a fourth helper for its first summer camp: she volunteered and its leader (Ernie) became her husband in 1944, towards the end of their service with the RAF. This remarkable partnership lasted until Ernie died in 1998.

Betty and Ernie had two children, Diane and Judith, but Betty continued to serve and enjoy the Guide movement in many different capacities, often involving their daughters in their earlier years. On their retirement to Otford in 1985 Betty continued to take an active part in Guiding as a member of the Trefoil Guild.

She was also a faithful member of St Bartholomew's Church, the Women's Fellowship at the Methodist Church, the Otford Society and the Lunch Club. However, as someone said to me recently, for all her care, for all her service, 'she was just a lovely, lovely lady' – and one that we will all miss very much indeed.

Doug Cracknell

Daphne Perry

Daphne Perry was born in Hastings. She studied at Brighton School of Pharmacy and graduated in 1949 and worked at Boots until her marriage to David in 1952. They moved to Otford in 1959 where the couple ran the pharmacy and provided medication for the whole village.

They retired in 1998 and celebrated their golden wedding in 2002 on safari in Africa, when Daphne's interest in helping young people in rural Africa intensified and she supported this cause by donating to the Sevenoaks Kenya African Trust.

She will be remembered in Otford for her help and advice on health matters, and dispensing numerous pills and potions to many of the Otford residents.

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Adult (Couple)	£5

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