

# The Otford Society NewsLetter

Registered with the Civic Trust  
Affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England  
and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies

[www.otford.info/offordsociety](http://www.otford.info/offordsociety)

**MARCH 2012**



## **A YEAR of CELEBRATIONS**

At last, the year we have been eagerly awaiting is here. 2012 is a year of celebrations.

At the top of the list will be the Queen's Jubilee, but we also have the Olympic Games and on a more local level, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. Rather like the year of the abdication of Edward VIII or the end of the Second World War in 1945, the year 2012 will forever be a marker in history books about the United Kingdom. Every generation has one or two such dates and this is one of ours.

The plans for Otford's celebration of the Queen's Jubilee are taking shape under the guidance of Councillor Howard Leicester. There will be special activities for children, a concert in St Bartholomew's Church and a Civic Service followed by a picnic on the green. On Monday 4 June a Beacon will be lit in the late evening, when the newly formed Community Choir will sing. There will be street parties on June 5 which will bring people out of their houses in a festive spirit. A historic exhibition is planned (1952 – 2012) in the club room of the Village Hall and there will be a host of sporting events.

## A Year of Celebrations (cont)

Recently, an Otford Community Jubilee choir has been formed, which we hope will sing at some events during Jubilee week - apart from when the beacon is lit. This choir is currently meeting once a fortnight in St Bartholomew's Church and is open to anyone who fancies a sing, so just come along on Tuesday evenings. All the information about plans for Jubilee week is available on Howard Leicester's website – so do keep up to date with what's going on.

In April we look forward to celebrating St George's Day – combined with Shakespeare's birthday. We will again hold the event on our own territory, in The Woodman by the pond. All being well, we will have a guest speaker! Our thanks to Jim, the landlord, for allowing us to take over his pub for this event. A special ticket will be required for this lunch and it will be limited to 40 members.

Although we some way off from the Olympics, I'm sure that many Otfordians will be taking a keen interest in the different sporting events as they take place. I wonder how many visitors from around the world will take a day off and visit the countryside. Otford is exactly the sort of place they'll be looking for!

Up to the end of 2011, the weather has been quite mild. But at the beginning of January the very cold weather arrived. It has been the coldest January for many years, with a heavy snow fall and temperatures down to –10C. When the next 3 months have passed, we can look forward to one of the most eventful summers in living memory. So often do we hear people sing the words 'Land of Hope and Glory' and this summer we hope our celebrations for our Queen are indeed filled with the kind of Glory which so naturally comes to life on these great British occasions – all a part of the tradition which has grown over many generations.

A.V. Wiltshire  
Chairman

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## Treasurers Report

Our position at the end of our Financial Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011 has strengthened as a result of an excellent performance in collecting membership subscriptions and the exceptional factors itemised below.

### **Exceptional Factors**

Residue of Funds transferred from Radio	£2471.03
Anonymous Donation to be used for The Gateway Project	£1000.00

As a result of the above our Income exceeded our expenditure by £4751.15p but when these factors are adjusted we still had a surplus of £1280.12p. This compared to a small loss in the previous year of £40

Profits on the Fete were £359.70, although £146.08 of the profit was donated to the Fete Committee. The Garden Party raised £172.35 which includes the proceeds from the Raffle (£75.85) which have been donated to The Otford Benevolent Society.

Our balance sheet is strong with the total of our accumulated funds rising from £17,960 at the end of 2010 to £22711 at the end of 2011.

However, under the terms of the transfer of Radio Funds 50% (£1235.65) of the transferred amount must be spent on the Apple Orchard Project. Similarly, the Anonymous Donation of £1000 must only be used on the Gateway Project.

### **Outlook for 2012**

We start 2012 on a positive note thanks to the success of our Gift Aid Campaign. We have now received £737.93p from HM Revenue and Customs, although this arrived too late for our financial year 2011. We still have to claim on our 2011 subscriptions which should raise a further £200. Additionally, we were successful in selling the remaining stock of Christmas Cards the proceeds of which arrived too late for 2011 and so will feature in our 2012 accounts. The proceeds from the sale of the cards was £109.

Derek Buck



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
of  
THE OTFORD SOCIETY  
on**



**Thursday 29 March 2012  
Otford Village Memorial Hall  
At 8.00pm**

**Discussion on the Future of the Palace Tower**

All members are invited to attend. The meeting is open to all who are interested in matters concerning our village

Newcomers to the committee are welcome. Nominations can be made in advance, or on the night, providing they have a seconder and the permission of the nominee.

President Ken Gunderson

Chairman	Tony Wiltshire
Secretary	Carol Griffiths
Treasurer	Derek Buck
Membership	Vincent Tilley
Newsletter Distribution	Elisabeth Lindsay
Traffic/Roads	Jeff Lee
Minutes Secretary	John Anthony
Dennis Glasspool, Andrea Kelly	

Minutes of 2011 AGM will be available at the meeting



## **Membership Secretary's Report**

The Society's current total paid up membership for 2011 was 1,143, which is an increase of 12 on the previous year. So our high level of support is being maintained and this is a great achievement for a village amenity society. It helps to add weight to any arguments we wish to put to local authorities on developments affecting our amenities or environment and is particularly important at this time, with the development pressures from the government on the South East.

For this I thank you, our members and especially the Liaison Officers, who deliver your newsletters and collect the membership subscriptions. Please help them as much as possible by getting your subscriptions to them if they call when you are out.

Also please try and remember to encourage your neighbours to join the Society, especially new residents moving into the area, as it is important to maintain this high level of support we have in the village.

Vincent Tilley.  
Membership Secretary.  
01959 522491

## The FUTURE of the PALACE TOWER

The Palace Tower is a key feature in Otford's heritage, but a point in time has arrived when its future must be given some thought. Sevenoaks District Council has been responsible for the Tower, including Palace Field and its structures, since the 1950s, but they want to reduce their expenditure and areas of responsibility. They have invited the Otford community to take on responsibility for the site. Otford Parish Council is not prepared to do this, so it has been suggested by Rod Shelton (who has done so much to protect the village) that a Building Preservation Trust (BPT) should be created. A BPT would allow representatives of the whole community to be involved in development or use of the site and would enable access to funding bodies.



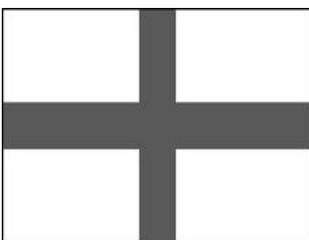
The Parish Plan indicates the importance of the Tower to the community and options for its future in terms of basic preservation and possible community use. The costs for such work are unknown but would no doubt be considerable. Before Otford as a community can consider such a commitment, a survey has to be undertaken in order to determine the present condition and state of the Tower and hence the steps required to make it – in the first instance – weatherproof and structurally sound. Such a survey will cost in the region of £4,000.

At a recent Otford Society committee meeting it was agreed that – despite the difficulties involved - the Tower is worthy of preservation and of becoming a community-owned amenity. The Society will donate £500 in the first instance towards the cost of the inspection survey and will help with further fund-raising from the membership. Contributions from members will be very welcome, and we propose to allocate time for discussion of this whole issue at the Society's AGM on 29 March.

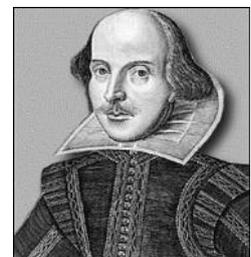
If you do wish to make a donation, please send your cheque payable to The Otford Society to The Treasurer, 69, Knighton Road, Otford, TN14 5LE or if convenient by transfer into our account at Lloyds Bank, Sort Code 30 97 49 account No. 01442052

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## St George's Day and Shakespeare's Birthday Celebration Lunch



Members and friends are invited to the  
St George's Day Celebration Lunch  
at the Woodman, Otford  
Monday 23 April 2012.  
12.00 for 12.30



Menu :  
Roast Beef (or a vegetable option)  
Dessert and coffee  
**Cost £13.00**

Drinks will be available at the bar.

Limited to 40 people. Book now to avoid disappointment

Tickets available from Tony Wiltshire 01959 524887  
Please make cheques payable to the Otford Society  
Any unsold tickets will be available at the AGM

As well as raising our glasses to England's Patron's Saint and Shakespeare, we will remember the Centenary of Octavia Hill, campaigner for the preservation of open spaces and recreation areas. She was co-founder of the National Trust, set up in 1895, to preserve place of historic interest and natural beauty.

## More Shops !

In our occasional series - here are more photographs of some of our shops, as they were in years gone by. In this edition - part of the High Street.



*Cottages in High Street - Demolished 1935*



*Greengrocer and Bakery 1943*



*Farm Shop & Bakery - 1970's*



*Farm Shop & Bakery at night - late 1980's*

Many thanks to Ed Thompson for the photographs from his collection

## The Otford Benevolent Society - A Brief History

When we consider the many organisations which are dispensing culture and charity to those interested and to those need of help in our village, it is perhaps hardly surprising that one of our societies is not as well known as it deserves to be. So here is something of what is known of the Otford Benevolent Society, from past records and also the work which it is doing today.

Formed in 1912, it is one of the most senior Societies in the village. Probably the first reference to it appears in the Annual Report of the Rev. W.E. Lutyens concerning Church matters for the year to Easter 1913. This covers the Church and parish societies and is not to be confused with the Parish Magazine.

The Report states: *"The most important step taken during last year was the formation of the Otford Benevolent Committee. Its main object was to bring the whole parish into line and make the body bear its part in the sufferings of the members and the response has been spontaneous"*. An Almoner, Miss Robinson was appointed and during the months of March, April and May 1912, 150 visits were made and 24 cases dealt with. The Report continues: *"The Committee has already been able to think of some constructive work to prevent and allay illness when it comes. They have under consideration a plan to erect a dental clinic in connection with the Day Schools ....."* There is also available the report and account of the Benevolent Committee for the year to 31 March 1914. A Dental Clinic account is included which discloses

the services of a dental surgeon and the purchase of a dental chair. The brief report states: (a) *51 necessitous cases in the parish have been assisted and the Honorary Almoner had made 600 visits;* (b) *the Dental Clinic had served a useful purpose and at the request of the Vicar of Kemsing, children from that parish had also participated;* (c) *the Clinic had treated 68 from Otford, 29 from Kemsing, for extractions and fillings.* The Clinic's operations were discontinued from May 1913.

It is quite clear that the work and finance of the Committee has resulted mainly from the administration of Sir Thomas Smythe's Charity from which the Village has benefited since 1620. Sir Thomas was a leading figure in Elizabethan times – Chairman of a government Committee which was in charge of equipping and victualling of the ships taking part in Sir Francis Drake's expeditions. He lived in the Darenth Valley and was very much a Kentish man. Twenty-six parishes benefited from his will, including Tunbridge Wells, Wilmington, Sutton-at-Hone, Otford and Dunton Green. Tonbridge School also benefited. The Charity is under the management of the Skinners Company, one of the twelve great City Livery Companies. From time to time schemes have been made by the Court of Chancery and Charity Commissioners creating some variation in the charitable trusts, in order to meet changing demands and to ensure, as far as possible, the full use of the income which, as the years went by, was and is still increasing.

Unfortunately, there will always be in towns, villages and in country areas, personal needs to be provided for and services to be met, which the state does not or cannot properly satisfy. Consequently our Society, which is always searching for outlets of fulfilment, should enjoy a very long future.

The present day functions of the Society are the provision of small grants to tide over some emergency or sudden requirement, to provide coal, special food and other necessities, and at Christmas, to make gifts of £10 and upwards, income permitting. This administrative work is an almoner, assisted by a secretary and treasurer. The Society meets three times a year, under the Chairmanship of the Vicar.

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## OUTRAGED of OTFORD

I am incandescent with rage – why is it that some dog owners are such “*expletive deleted*” people who can't be bothered to clear up after their pooches!

A few days ago, it was a bright sunny morning and so I decide to stroll down to the village. I was walking along the foot path just past Wickham Field with the sun shining in my eyes when I saw a young lady approaching with a buggy. The foot path there is very narrow due to the intrusion of detritus from the hedge row and protruding briars (and that's another rant) and so I stepped off the path to let the young lady through.

As soon as I stepped onto the grass I feel that horrible sinking feeling as by shoe started to sink into a pile of putrefying pooch pooh but it was too late to withdraw my foot. I bit my lip and waited for the young lady to pass before I looked at my shoe and swore gently to myself. My shoe was encased in smelly pooh and so I had to return home to wash it off.

If “*expletive deleted*” dog owners can't be bothered to clear up after their beloved pooches pooh we should give them doggy ASBO's preventing their dogs from going more than 50 feet from their homes.

The build up of pooh will soon teach them the errors of their ways. If “*expletive deleted*” dog owners can't be bothered to clear up after their beloved pooches pooh we should give them doggy ASBO's preventing their dogs from going more than 50 feet from their homes. The build up of pooh will soon teach them the errors of their ways.

If that doesn't work how about doggy nappies and if all else fails bring back the village stocks for the errant owners.

*Outraged of Otford !*

### **Editors Note:**

If you would like to rant, rave, or just gently bleat about things that outrage or irritate you, please submit your thoughts to the editor. Please do not mention names or other information that

could identify any individuals and please replace any swear words or profanities with “*expletive deleted*” as our editor is a sensitive soul. Also, remember not to libel anyone.

We will try to publish all “Outraged of Otford” submissions but can’t guarantee that we will be able to.

The Otford Society cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of correspondence published in this column.

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## THE WORK ON THE GATEWAYS continues .....

As you drive round this lovely country and occasionally see village gateways welcoming you to Piddletrenthide or Much Binding-in-the Marsh, and sending the message that you should PLEASE respect the locality and drive carefully and slowly, you might get the impression that such gateways are a doddle to make and install. Just a few bits of wood, a sign, a few tins of white paint, and it’s done. Well, it’s not so simple. It takes time, money and a fair degree of battling with the authorities. But thanks to the commitment of a number of good people in the village including our village people, we’re on our way. Kent Highway Services have finally answered our questions, and we have a design nearly complete. Colleagues in the community will be leading the project and seeking funding to add to what we already have. The Parish Council has been relentless in seeking information from Kent Highways, and we look forward to working with our local councillors to get the gateways installed in the near future. Meanwhile: watch out for Speedwatch, and drive carefully and within the limits. After all, this is what so many people have been seeking.

Jeff Lee

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## Otford Village Fete - Monday 4 June

The annual fete will be held over the Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend. This year our theme is Olympics. Once again Elands Veterinary Clinic has agreed to run our very popular Dog Show and visitors are encouraged to register at 12noon on the day of the fete.

Unlike previous years our procession will not go through the village but will make its way around the Recreation Ground at 1.00pm allowing more people the opportunity to see the parade.

Our website will be regularly updated on the attractions: [www.otford.info/villagefete](http://www.otford.info/villagefete).

If you would like to help out on the day of the fete we would be very grateful. Please email [patty.chatterjee@virgin.net](mailto:patty.chatterjee@virgin.net) for more information.



## Welcome to Greater Sevenoaks ?

According to an article published in Sevenoaks Chronicle on January 26<sup>th</sup> this year, Sevenoaks Town Council are considering creating a ‘super authority’ by merging Sevenoaks Town Office with the parish councils of its surrounding villages. The idea is to cut costs by creating greater purchasing power for the maintenance of facilities that the villages all have in common, for example; grass cutting on the playing fields.

This new ‘super authority’ would encompass Dunton Green, Riverhead, Seal, Otford, Chevening and possibly Weald and Kemsing. This initiative is part of the Community Governance Review where Sevenoaks District Council will decide whether the parishes are the correct size and whether the boundaries are correctly positioned.

The article also quoted one town councillor as saying ‘If you look at the parishes neighbouring Sevenoaks town, it’s becoming quite hard to distinguish between them.’ He also added that

Government guidelines were suggesting that 'larger parishes would best suit the needs of the area'.

Our parish councillors and the staff in the parish office provide a wide variety of services and support to the village of Otford, and I for one think that it would be a great shame if in the name of 'progress' this function was to be centralised. Some of us may not be aware of the wide range of services Otford Parish Council offer, here are a few examples:-

Maintain the churchyard and additional burial ground, the pond, the recreation ground and its toilets, palace approach, palace field and the chalkpit. Comment on planning applications, liaise with Kent Highways to maintain our roads, help set up Speedwatch to reduce traffic speeds. Plant trees and seek funding for a new children's playground at Hale Lane recreation ground. Provide an environment for our community warden to meet with residents and discuss any concerns. Provide a monthly Citizens Advice surgery. They also produce a monthly parish newsletter providing details of meetings for the many societies and clubs that are active in our village, an essential aid for any Otfordian's social calendar.

If like me you like living in a vibrant village community with its own parish council and office and want to conserve the local provision of these services then maybe you would like to make your views on this matter known.

If you have any views on merging or grouping parishes, altering parish boundaries or potential changes to parish names you can contact Ian Bigwood, Electoral Services Manager, Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG. Or, email [selreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:selreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

Andrea Kelly Otford Society Committee Member

### **Dates for your Diary**

29 March	Otford Society AGM	8pm	Memorial Hall
23 April	St George's Day Lunch	12.30pm	Woodman Pub
27 April	Quiz Night Tea Rooms	7.30pm	Hospice of Hope
4 June	Annual Village Fete	Theme	Olympics
5 June	Queen's Diamond Jubilee		
23 June	St Bartholomew's Fair	2pm	Castle House
7 July	Otford Society Garden Party		Broughton Manor

### **Subscription Rates**

Adult (Single)	£4	Retired Single	£2
Adult (Couple)	£5	Retired Couple	£3

*Next Otford Society Newsletter – June 2012*  
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