



The Otford Society

www.otford.info/otfordsociety

Autumn 2013 Newsletter

Otford Society Autumn Meeting - Thursday 17th October

"The Darent: The Story of our River"

Full details on page 3!

A Note from the Chairman

I concluded my article in the June Newsletter by saying that I hoped we would have some decent weather after the dreadful winter we suffered. In the weeks following we were treated to some of the most Mediterranean sunshine and blue skies that I can ever remember. This only underlines once more that the UK weather can be anything it wants to be, at any time of the year. I think it was Bob Hope who said that whenever he came to England he would look out and see the sun shining and then, as he left the hotel, take his umbrella.

Our Summer Garden Party was a great success. It was one of the best, and our thanks go to Elisabeth and Keith Lindsay for allowing us to use the grounds of Russell House School. Thanks also to Derek Buck and members of the committee for all their work beforehand, as well as on the day.

Having advertised for several months for new committee members, we had three by the end of June - Penelope Winter, Ted Scott and Phil Chapman. We welcome our new colleagues and hope they find pleasure and some degree of fulfilment in the months ahead. It's worth reminding ourselves that the Otford Society is one of the largest amenity societies in England.

The redesigned car park is now in full use. Let us hope that the new layout will solve some of our parking problems. Are there going to be any concessions for regular users like the W.I. or the luncheon club? It remains to be seen.

We will soon arrive at our Autumn Meeting, on October 17th, when we look forward to a good gathering. Rod Shelton, who is writing a book about our River Darent, will be speaking to us about the river's story.

I still await someone to come forward and take over my role as Chairman, before I step down at the Society's AGM next April. The job is a rewarding one, so if you're looking for a way to help the village and think you'd be suitable then please do get in touch.

Very best wishes,

A. V. Wiltshire, Chairman

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About Us

The Otford Society is an amenities charity specialising in preserving the rural character of Otford by monitoring planning and development activities, and improving the quality of Otford village life by providing funding to improve village amenities.

We are currently looking for projects to fund which will meet the above goals. To submit an idea, please email otfordsociety@otford.net

Apology

In the last issue, it was incorrectly implied that estate agent Ibbett Mosely is no longer trading on Bubblestone Parade. The committee would like to apologise unreservedly for this error and assure readers that, after more than sixty years in Otford, Ibbett Mosely continue to sell houses and offer a friendly professional service - which is borne out by the number of sold boards in the village.



Obituary: Valerie Meridith Gulliver

Val was born in 1930 at Crayford and attended Bromley Girls' Grammar School. She had a happy upbringing as an only child in a comfortable and loving home. Upon leaving school, she joined the staff at Charles Hoare and Co. Bankers with an office in Park Lane London where customers would regularly come to view their tiaras!

She met Ray whilst singing with the Orpington and Bromley Choral Society and they married in 1956. They initially lived in Farnborough in a flat at Ray's mother's house, but with Simon a toddler and Roger on the way they moved to Sutton at Hone. Val dreamed of a bigger, better house and, during a 401 bus ride to Sevenoaks one day, she saw a small new development of houses being built in Otford. Her dream came to fruition with a move to The Old Walk in 1961 where Susie was born the following year. The family thrived in this wonderful, safe community and Val's contributions to the village began.

Gulliver Timber Treatments' embryonic beginnings were forged in 1971 with Val working on the book-keeping. For a time, the business was run from home with board meetings, it is said, taking place at bath time! It soon needed bigger premises and moved to the High St then to Bank Buildings at the station.

Val was the woman behind the man whilst caring for her growing family. She took a leading role in Inner Wheel, an organisation for the wives of Rotarians, dedicated to charitable works. She volunteered for many fund-raising activities and enjoyed her year as President whilst also supporting Ray's work with Rotary. Val was a keen member of the Evening W.I. and she and Ray took their duties on the rota for the Heritage Centre seriously. They were both active members of the Otford Society, attending and participating in all events as they did with Church activities, especially the Summer Fair.

With their children having flown the nest, a period of time to themselves was enjoyed with many exotic and wonderful travelling opportunities of which they took full advantage, especially if the journey was to be made by train.

With the onset of Ray's dementia, Val was stoically at his side as his condition deteriorated and showed great strength and fortitude, only moving him to a nursing home as her own health became compromised and hospitalisation was required. Sadly she was never able to have him home again. Her courage in facing life-limiting cancer was remarkable, and a true test of her character. An intensely private person, she didn't want to make a fuss. We shall miss her.

To finish, a quote from the words of her family at her funeral, for us all: *"If Val were to leave only one legacy to us, her children, it was the foresight to move her family to Otford to enjoy this life-affirming opportunity and give us the chance to experience an upbringing in such a wonderful place."*

Joan M. Beacom

Memories of Otford

My wife frequently tells people how difficult it was to convince me to move from the house in Chelsfield where I was living when we met. Since getting married, we'd worked hard to decorate and modernise it, and I wanted to enjoy the results for a while before the upheaval of moving. Understandably, though, Caren wanted to move to a property that we'd chosen together.

When we bought our house in Well Road five years ago, we felt sure we'd found a lovely place to live. I first came to Otford in the 1980s to visit a school friend in Willow Park. More recently, Caren and I had regularly driven through the village on missions to the DIY stores - and always smiled as we passed the listed pond.

Any doubts that I had about moving to Otford vanished almost immediately. Not only does the village score in clearly visible ways like the beautiful semi-rural surroundings, historic buildings, and easy transport links, but also everyone is so friendly! There's no better example of this than our neighbours organising a tea party a few days after we arrived, to welcome us to the road. It's little wonder that, once in the village, so few people ever choose to leave.

What drew you to Otford? What are your abiding memories of the village? Do you have tales to tell of growing up here, celebrating events like jubilees or weddings, or being supported by the community? I'd like to make this a regular feature in the newsletter, so please email your stories to otfordsociety@otford.net

Phil Chapman

Outraged of Otford

Everyone agrees that we shouldn't drop litter. Everyone agrees that dog owners shouldn't let their pets foul our paths and green spaces. Everyone agrees that recycling is the right thing to do. But as usual, a minority spoil things for the rest of us. Who should go "in the stocks" this month? People who don't pay attention to what can and can't go in clear recycling sacks.

Strolling around the village early on bin day, it's hard not to notice the rubbish that's been put out. In amongst the usual newspaper and tin can recycling, I frequently see Tetra Pak® fruit juice cartons, carrier bags, and the plastic trays used for ready meals. All of these items feature on the "No thanks" list that's included with every roll of bags. If a lorry of recycling is contaminated by inappropriate items, then the whole load could be rejected and go to landfill! So please ensure that your waste is always correctly sorted and recycled.

Name withheld

Recycling details at <http://tinyurl.com/ovnh2ov>

Broadband

Otford is better served than many local villages when it comes to broadband Internet access, but of course that never stops people wanting a faster and faster service! This applies equally to home users streaming ever more TV and music, and business users needing to stay competitive with companies in more urban areas.

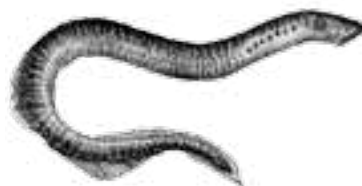
At the time of writing, BT have still not scheduled an upgrade of the village's telephone exchange to support "superfast" fibre broadband. The roll-out plan is, however, influenced by demand, so it's well worth registering your interest (with no obligation) at <http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/>

Phil Chapman

The Darent: The Story of our River

The Otford Society's Autumn Meeting, on Thursday 17th October at 8pm in the Memorial Hall, will feature a talk by Rod Shelton with the title, "The Darent: The Story of our River". His fascinating audio-video presentation promises to answer these intriguing questions - and many more besides!

- 22 miles long but jam-packed with history - what's the name of the river?
- Where would you find a woolly mamouth and a straight-tusked elephant?
- Which young woman's body lay undiscovered for 350,000 years?
- Groups of Neanderthal hunters followed wild game across the Thames basin and up the Darent - why?
- Mesolithic men hunted migrating animals - what did they leave behind?
- Who were the bell-beaker people?
- How many kilometres generally lie between the Romans' farmsteads and villas along the Darent?
- What did the Romans worship?
- Why did Hengist and Horsa come over to Kent?
- Where did they site their Royal Court?
- Where did Offa see fiery serpents in the sky?
- Who beat a bloody retreat from Otford in 1016?
- What was the deal made between Elizabeth I and her German jewellery maker?
- What has Shakespeare got to do with the Darent?
- Affluence and effluence - how did the Darent play its part?
- What was the glue that made our communities?
- What are crayfish, lampreys and "red-herrings"?
- Who was Mr. Colyer and what's the story of the 9lb trout?
- What's the difference between a riffle and a pool?
- Where have all the trout gone?
- What does abstraction mean?
- What are the Countryside Partnership and the Environment Agency doing, and what can we do?



Otford Present

The Otford Society Summer Garden Party took place on the warm, dry evening of Saturday 20th July, in the grounds of Russell House School at the kind invitation of Elisabeth Lindsay. The event drew a record attendance, with local residents joined by the Mayor of Sevenoaks who tweeted a photo that showed him “Enjoying the view at Russell House School at the Otford Society garden party”. The photos below try to capture the atmosphere of the event where so many people from our community came together.



The Hidden Gems of Otford

While reading the article in the June Newsletter which highlighted how lucky we are in Otford with our shops, businesses, support services, and entertainments, it made me wonder if this just touched the surface of the full range of opportunities on our doorstep, so I set myself the challenge to discover other “hidden gems”.

For example, amongst our hairdressers and barbers, we have our cycling, fund-raising, barber Stan who is due to be featured in the next Kent County Magazine (CM), while some roads have a singing postman.

In addition to the many skills of those residents who use our local transport networks to travel to work outside Otford, some people do not operate their businesses from commercial or retail premises but are instead based from home.

If we have birthday celebrations to arrange, there are clowns and party entertainers, plus a cookery school to perfect our culinary skills. When going out or away, there are chauffeur services, and we have boarding kennels for our canine family members, as well as cat, dog, horse, and house-sitters on hand to provide extra peace of mind.

As our teenagers seek their independence, we have driving instructors based in the village, and a removal company as well as two estate agents. There are specialists providing career advice, as well as those supporting individuals and businesses with accounting, marketing, communications, procurement, delivery, recruitment and other HR services.

When the laptop and printer are running below par, we have computer repair specialists to handle all hardware and software matters and, for the wider home environment, qualified experts in plumbing, electrical work, telephony, gas, heating, painting and decorating, roofs, gutters and chimneys, supplemented by our own builders' merchant which supports even those tackling small DIY jobs. For larger projects, we have consultants specialising in all aspects of residential house building, as well as timber treatment experts who have operated from Otford for over forty years.

All of the above are supplemented by the enterprises a mile outside the village on the Vestry Estate and the adjacent retail park whose supermarket, petrol station, garden centre, car/bike centre and pet store are accessible by footpath.

So the next time you need help, why not try the businesses on your doorstep?

Sarah Fenn

Twinning

“L’Entente Cordiale” went up a notch when eighteen members of the Otford-Neufchâtel-Hardelot Twinning Association spent the weekend of 22-23 June with their opposite numbers in Neufchâtel-Hardelot, in Nord-Pas de Calais.

Bleary-eyed travellers arrived at Neufchâtel by 11.00 to a warm welcome at La Mairie, where local dignitaries gave a review of activities since the signing of the Twinning Charter in 2011, plus a programme of proposed events for the coming year. These include a visit to the Lord Mayor’s Show, joint choir and sports activities, plus visits to battle sites in Northern France to mark the outbreak of World War I. There are also plans for family days with events that appeal to the young. Jane Lawrey, Otford Twinning Association President, presented the Mayor of Neufchâtel-Hardelot with a picture of the Otford Palace Tower, painted by Ken Gunderson in 2009, which was well received.

A delicious lunch was served in the Salle des Fetes, after which some “Twins” went for an “eco walk” in nearby woodlands, while others went shopping or to the beach. All gathered for tea at a residential centre where schools and other groups can stay and explore the region, practise their French and learn about French culture. To the surprise of the Otfordians, the centre is owned and run by Kent County Council as part of a European initiative. The centre was originally set up twenty years ago for Kent school children, but now the wonderful facilities are open to children UK-wide on a commercial basis.

All convened in the evening at Le Golf des Dunes, one of Hardelot’s two beautiful golf clubs, for a gourmet meal at which we were entertained by the local community choir. Elizabeth and Cliff Ward from Otford responded with a rendition of “There’s a hole in my bucket” to the delight of all present!

Sunday started with an early breakfast, then a coach took the joint party to St. Omer through rolling countryside and charming villages, with a commentary highlighting the region’s long and interesting history, back to Roman times.

The morning was spent visiting “La Coupole”, an underground warren where some development of V1 and V2 bombers took place towards the end of the Second World War. This visit was fascinating and chilling in equal measure – fascinating for the science of the rocket technology, but chilling because of the information about the suffering of people under the Nazi regime.

On returning above ground, it was heartening to see the sun, which shone during the traditional bistro lunch and a boat trip through the picturesque marshes of St. Omer, reminiscent of the Norfolk Broads. “Twins” were entranced by the flora and fauna, and the secluded residential properties. The coach returned the party for tea with host families and a further chance to practise language skills before heading home after a full and varied weekend.

Otford welcomed its French Twins on September 14-15 for a Barn Dance and fish and chip supper on the Saturday evening in the Memorial Hall, including singing by the Community Choir, after a visit to Chatham Dockyard.

Our next social gathering will be at the Woodman Pub on Monday 4 November from 7.45pm. Drinks at your own expense. You will be most welcome.

If you would like to be involved in Twinning, perhaps by visiting Hardelot for a day or with overnight hospitality, offering hospitality, or sharing your interests, then please contact Jane Lawrey via the Otford Parish Council Office.

Eileen Murray-Giles and Lesley Alexander

A Haul of Halls

For a village its size, Otford offers a surprising range of clubs and events. Many take place in one of the four halls which we are lucky enough to have. This series of articles features some of the regular hall users.

This issue: Luncheon Club

Formed in the late 1980s by local resident Mrs. Thompson, lunch club meets on most Thursdays in the Memorial Hall’s Club Room, and provides a hot, home-cooked meal for just £3 to a membership of around forty of Otford’s older residents.

More than that, though, the club is a key social event for villagers who may otherwise have little company, or find it hard to get out and about, helped by subsidised transport to and from the hall provided by Age UK.

The club is staffed entirely by volunteers, who are split into five teams that take it in turns to source and prepare ingredients, cook the meals, and serve it to the guests. In this endeavour they are wonderfully supported by local butcher Paul Copus and greengrocer Gordon Moore.

As well as the chance to chat and eat good food, the guests also organise themselves a weekly raffle with prizes donated by volunteers and local businesses. Community warden Paul Robertson is also often on hand to discuss any issues and concerns which attendees have.

At Christmas there’s a free meal, with festive decorations in the hall and musical entertainment.

Overall, there can be few better examples of a community coming together to support each other than Otford’s luncheon club. If you’d like to help, please call Maureen Bolton on 522789. Alternatively, if you’d like to join as a member then call Diana Arnaud on 523297.

Phil Chapman

Planning Matters

Planning law has been undergoing a number of changes in the past two years. So perhaps it's worth reminding anyone contemplating making changes to their home, that the best advice is always to have a chat with the Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) planning duty officer first, via (01732) 227000 option 3. He/she can give you sound guidance and point you in the right direction. In the meantime, perhaps this thumbnail outline will help with some general pointers.

Let's start with extensions:

As I understand it, on a detached house you can now put up an 8m ground floor extension limited to 4m high, across the full width of the rear of your house, without planning permission. For a semi-detached or terraced house the extension is limited to 6m depth. But - and this is important - you **must** inform the SDC before you do anything (minimal description only and no drawings are required). What is also important is that these lengths are measured from the "original" back wall as it was when the house was first built or in 1947. (In other words, you cannot add an extension to an extension.)

The SDC planning department will then enquire of your bordering neighbours (on each side and at the rear) whether they have any objections. If any of them do, then the application becomes subject to all the normal planning regulations. Of course, if your home is within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (i.e. in the North of Otford) or within the Conservation Area, then these options do not apply and you must always apply for planning permission for any development.

What about changing your drive or front garden? Today, cars are growing larger and there seem to be more of them. A number of Otford homes have broadened their driveways or extended their front garden parking areas to accommodate their vehicles. The first "planning" rule is that, whatever you do, you must use a porous surface so that rainwater can soak away naturally and not fill the road. (If not, you can be ordered to take up the new drive and re-lay it!). Unless you are in the Conservation Area, you usually do not need permission to change your drive. However, our Village Design Statement, which after all was written by the community, makes it clear that generally a front garden with flowers and grass is much preferred to one of slabs. We are, after all, still a country village. But if you are in any doubt, a quick phone call to the planning duty officer may be reassuring.

What about overgrown footpaths and over-hanging bushes and trees? Well, it is that time of year again and people always ask Otford Parish Council (OPC) to do something about it. There are in fact two separate issues here:

Footpaths are the responsibility of Kent County Council (KCC), not SDC or OPC. It is an unnecessary, impractical, bureaucratic complication, I agree. It would be far simpler if responsibility for the footpaths were to be localised. Changes are rumoured but nothing has yet happened. So keep your fingers crossed and lobby our KCC councillor. Legally, you should not go out there and cut back the nettles etc. yourself. Unofficially? I could not possibly comment...

Overgrown hedges which spill out over the footpath, or trees whose branches sweep you in the face as you walk the pavement, are a different matter. They are solely the responsibility of the owner of the land on which they grow. So complain to the householder and KCC Highways or Footpaths and ask them to cut it back. Despite the apparent injustice of it, particularly to those whose sight or movement is impaired, you cannot legally go out there with a pair of shears and do it yourself, so please be aware and ask the householder or KCC to do it.

Rod Shelton
Planning advisor to the Otford Society

Are there any planning issues which you'd like to see discussed in future editions of the newsletter?

Would you like to put an argument for or against a particular development or issue?

Send your ideas and opinions to otfordsociety@otford.net with a subject of "Planning Matters".

Leisure Centre

At the time of going to press, a decision was about to be taken regarding a planning application by David Lloyd Leisure Ltd to build a new gym and associated facilities at Bartram Farm (to the left of the A225, after the M26 but before reaching McDonald's).

The Otford Society submitted a strong objection to this development on behalf of you, its members, citing concerns over the visual impact of the proposed buildings and the extra traffic which it would bring.

However, the overwhelming majority of public comments regarding the application - many lodged by Otford residents - have been in favour of the leisure centre being built. Common opinions are that there aren't enough fitness facilities in the area, and that it would be a positive development for a somewhat run-down estate.

Certainly it's now a widely-held view that the most likely "magic bullet" for improving the health of the nation is exercise, and a major aspect of Otford's Parish Plan was "Encouraging a Fitter Community", so no-one can argue that gyms shouldn't be provided to meet demand. Therefore fighting plans such as David Lloyd's might be seen by many to be a case of "Not In My Back Yard".

The outcome is now out of our hands (unless the application is refused and an appeal is made) so perhaps we should search for some positives? Maybe development of the Vestry Estate area will make M26 slip roads an impossibility? Maybe leisure centre users will bring extra revenue to our local businesses?

There's a fine line between "preserving the rural character of Otford" and ensuring that villagers have access to up-to-date amenities. The Otford Society is here to serve its members, so let us know your views.

Phil Chapman

Hospice of Hope Events



hospicesofhope

Pre-Christmas Party

Friday 22nd November from 7pm until 11.30pm

Rowhill Grange Hotel & Spa, Wilmington, Kent

Come to our Pre-Christmas Party and catch up with family and friends before the rush of Christmas. Tickets are £30 per person and include an arrival drink, a fabulous three course gourmet dinner followed by coffee & mince pies, plus plenty of crackers and party poppers. Debbie Perolls will be performing during the meal and there will also be a disco later in the evening. Accommodation is available at Rowhill Grange.

To book, contact anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or call (01959) 525110.

Christmas Market followed by Ladies Lunch

Thursday 28th November from 10am until 3.30pm

Brands Hatch Place Hotel & Spa, Fawkham, Kent

Ladies, this is your opportunity to buy those last minute Christmas gifts in our Market, then enjoy a festive lunch and an entertaining talk and sing-along from Carol Anne Wells entitled "Travels With My Piano!".

Tickets cost £29.50 each and include a drink on arrival, a three course lunch with a glass of wine plus coffee afterwards, and of course the chance to browse the Christmas Market and hear the presentation by our guest speaker.

To book, contact anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or call (01959) 525110.

Christmas Wreath Making

Monday 9 December from 9.30am until 2.30pm

Church Hall, Bessels Green Baptist Church, Bessels Green, Kent

This event includes lunch, and of course you get to take your wreath home to hang over the festive period. Tickets cost £30 each including all materials - you only need to bring along your own secateurs and gloves.

To book, contact anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or call (01959) 525110.

Dates for your Diary

Monday 14th October	Otford Parish Council meeting
Thursday 17th October	Otford Society Autumn Meeting
Sunday 27th October	British Summer Time ends
Sunday 10th November	Remembrance Sunday
Monday 11th November	Otford Parish Council meeting
Saturday 23rd November	St. Bartholomew's Christmas Market
Monday 9th December	Otford Parish Council meeting
Wednesday 23rd April	St. George's Day
Thursday 24th April	Otford Society Annual General Meeting

To list events in the Spring newsletter, email otfordsociety@otford.net

Membership Report

The membership is fairly stable with some new members being recruited by the Liaison Officers as residents leave the area. Could those Officers who have not yet given me their 2013 subscriptions please do so, as the Treasurer needs to have these before November in order to prepare the accounts for auditing? Also could members please assist the Liaison Officers if they call for your subscriptions when you are not at home - if they leave a note asking you to send them your subscription, please could you endeavour to do so, to save them calling on you again?

We are still short of a Liaison Officer for the Pilgrims Way East area. Would it be possible for someone to manage St. Michaels Drive? There are only a few newsletters to deliver per year, plus collection of the members' subscriptions. If you can help then please give me a call on (01959) 522491.

Vincent Tilley

Treasurer's Report

The Society's current position is that we are financially secure and so far have earned a surplus of £177 on this year's activities, even after we made an exceptional donation of £1,750 to OPC which was used on The Village Gateway Project. £1,250 of this came from an anonymous donation which was gratefully received in 2011.

Our balance sheet remains strong with the total of our accumulated funds rising from £14,457 at the end of 2007 to £24,142 today.

Account Balances	
Lloyds Current Account	£2,889
NSI Investment Account	£10,865
Lloyds Fixed Rate Bond	£10,180
Cash	£208
Total Reserves	£24,142

Activities in 2013

St George's Day Lunch broke even.

Our presence at the Village Fête raised £287, of which £114.80 was donated to the Fête Committee.

The Garden Party raised £467 compared to £17 in 2012. This was due to a number of factors including: better weather, lower catering costs due to the generosity of our hosts, and a record attendance. The raffle was very successful and resulted in £122 being raised for a local charity.

Outlook to the end of 2013

Subscriptions still remain our main source of income and these are boosted by Gift Aid which has yet to be received for 2013. We have no outstanding debts and I expect our surplus to rise to around £600 by the end of the year unless we have any unforeseen costs.

Derek Buck

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

Meet the Committee

President: Ken Gunderson

Chairman: Tony Wiltshire

Tony was a music teacher for 45 years. Although now retired, he sometimes still plays as church organist. He is married with four children and eight grandchildren.

Treasurer: Derek Buck

Derek has been a committee member for over 10 years and Treasurer for 3 years. He is also Treasurer of the village's Memorial Hall.

Secretary: it could be you!

The Society needs a new Secretary / Organiser to help with the smooth running of its affairs. The duties are not onerous, and you'd be supported by the rest of the committee. If you're interested in volunteering, please email us.

Membership Secretary: Vincent Tilley

Born in Otford, Vincent moved away for a while but has now been back in the village for 31 years, and has acted as Membership Secretary for the last 15 years.

Minutes Secretary: Ted Scott

Ted has lived in Otford for 10 years, and is married with 2 sons.

Newsletter Editor: Phil Chapman

Phil moved to Otford in 2008 with his wife and dogs, and has just joined the Society. He works for a local I. T. company.

Newsletter Distribution: Elisabeth Lindsay

Elisabeth loves living in this beautiful and historic village, especially delivering the 1,000 newsletters to the Society's Liaison Officers - thank you to all who help her.

Also: Andrea Kelly, Dennis Glasspool, Jeff Lee & Penelope Winter

<p align="center">The Otford Society www.otford.info/otfordsociety otfordsociety@otford.net <i>Registered with the Civic Trust</i> <i>Affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England</i> <i>Registered charity 272974</i> Next Newsletter: Spring 2014</p>
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