

The Otford Society

www.otford.info/otfordsociety

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Autumn 2014 Newsletter

Otford Society Autumn Meeting - Thursday 16th October

Come and help to shape the future of the Society!

“November Nostalgia” live music - Saturday 8th November

Featuring pop and rock covers performed by Alibi!

Full details on page 4.

Chairman’s Message

The Summer Garden Party was again a great success thanks to the generosity of Russell House School, and the hard work of Elisabeth Lindsay. It must have been the first time that the school had to be checked by police, both in advance and on the day, as we were pleased to host the recently-appointed Defence Secretary, our MP Michael Fallon.

The Summer also saw the first outings of the Society’s Golf Group. We played at Darenth Valley in Shoreham and were fortunate to have good weather. We always plan to tee off at 15:30 for the front 9 on the basis that it gives those at work the chance to join us at 18:00 for the back 9. It is early days and the group has four members at the moment, and those at work have not always been able to attend. With the evenings drawing in we will now need to play during the day; it would be good to organise a Society golf day, possibly with a 9 hole Texas scramble in the morning, lunch and an 18 hole Stableford in the afternoon - and if I have spelled that incorrectly then you can tell the level of my golf! If you are interested, please do get in touch.

We hope that you will all be able to come to the Autumn meeting on October 16th, when we will be seeking your views on the way forward for the Society. New people are coming to the village and we need to get them engaged, to maintain and increase the membership. Your ideas on initiatives to enhance the Society’s appeal will be very helpful. We also hope that you will be able to come to our party on 8th November if you like live music. Details of both events are elsewhere in this newsletter.

*Keith Gofton
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



We are now on Twitter!

Follow us @OtfordSociety

What has the Otford Society ever done for us?

The Otford Society in its current form was established in 1976, principally to fight the threat of a junction being built between Sevenoaks Road and the M26 motorway, which was then about to begin construction. This campaign was of course successful, and the Society has lived on to become one of the biggest local amenity charities in the country - with part of its on-going remit being to keep a watchful eye on the ever-present danger of new major road developments, and maintain infrastructure, resources and funds that could be used to defend against future challenges to the character of our village.

Since then, the Otford Society has been involved in many different village projects - some large, others small. But each has had at its heart the desire to help or enhance the village and its environment. One of the earliest projects was to provide hanging baskets for some of the shops in the village. One or two of them are still there!

Two of the children's playgrounds in the village have benefited from the Otford Society's help: a donation of over £1,000 went towards the refurbishment of the playground in the Recreation Ground, while more recently the Hale Lane playground received a donation of £500.

The Mosaic on the wall of the Church Hall was a Millennium project which involved many residents. There were meetings with the artist, Oliver Budd, to propose content including flora and fauna, prehistoric animals, and moments from local history, while significant objects were also loaned to him to be featured in the design. The Otford Society donated £2,000 in order to make the mosaic a reality.

Renovation of the Pond was another large project, with over £5,000 collected from members. This formed part of a larger fund raised by Otford Parish Council with grants etc from government agencies and other sources. The cheque was handed over to the Chairman of the Parish Council, John Allen, in 2007 just before work began on the pond.

In 2013, it was the year of the gateways when, after several years of hard work by Jeff Lee and others, we gained "Welcome to Otford" signs on each of the roads leading into the village. The Otford Society contributed £1,750 to this project and the results are not only attractive but should also remind visiting motorists that they are entering a village community. Donations to the Speed Watch initiative have also supported this aim.

As we come up-to-date, the recent installation of defibrillators at key points around the village is another project that the Society has financially supported. Add to this the current activities detailed elsewhere on these pages, and hopefully you will need no further convincing of the positive contribution that the Otford Society makes to our village.

Carol Griffiths

Traffic Calming



Time certainly does go by... when you are trying to promote traffic-calming. Everything seems to take forever, glitches arise, and sometimes people forget where it all started and think it should have been done differently.

However, we are close – thanks to financial contributions from the Society and from Cllr Nick Chard, as well as support from Otford Parish Council – to having a Speed Indicator Device (SID) operational on Shoreham Road, to be followed soon by additional signage and road markings near the gateway at the north end. This means that all three main approach roads into the village have similar provision: an outer gateway reinforced by inner reminders, as recommended by Road Transport Laboratory research findings.

After the appearance of the Otford Parish Plan, numerous residents worked to produce evidence for traffic-calming and practical ideas, although there were strict limits as to what could be done and where things could be placed. Issues of sight lines and land ownership have made the choice of location for a SID on Shoreham Road particularly difficult but, after a false start, installation is now under way in the best available spot.

Please support and appreciate the Society's work on this – and above all set a good example to other traffic by keeping to 30mph and proudly sporting your "Otford 30" sticker. If you don't have one, get one from the Parish Office!

Jeff Lee

Otford Palace



The Palace Tower



Part of the Millennium Mosaic



The Village Pond (photo by Phil Clucas)



A Village Gateway



One of the defibrillators

The Otford Society's latest project is replacement of the information (or interpretation) boards on Palace Field. This type of board will be familiar from many different locations: the entrances to woodland walks, beside the seashore to show the different wildlife in the area, in public parks to provide information about amenities available there, and outside historic buildings such as Rochester Castle.

There used to be two of these boards on Palace Field: one just inside the entrance from the shops on Sevenoaks Road (Bubblestone Parade), and the other in front of the Tower. This latter board was removed a while ago because the post had rusted badly and the notice had faded so much that it was unreadable.

These original boards were supplied by the Parish Council in the mid-1990's and provided information about, and illustrations of, Otford Palace. Visitors could regularly be seen reading the boards during their walks around Palace Field, and many subsequently visited the Heritage Centre in the High Street to see the model of the Palace and marvel at the size and number of different buildings from which the site was originally formed.

The new boards aim to recreate the success of the originals, but with all-new interpretation panels created by a talented local designer, and state-of-the-art construction which the makers assure us will mean that the boards are fade-resistant as well as graffiti and vandal proof. All being well, the new boards will be installed by the end of 2014. We hope that they will last for many years, and provide visitors and residents alike with interesting information about our village's nationally-significant historic monument.

Carol Griffiths

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'Better that the whole lot fall down than that I should spend a penny on it.' That, in paraphrase, was the view of Elizabeth I four hundred years ago – and it would seem that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) is of a similar opinion today, even though it is responsible for the Palace Tower.

So what is the problem with the Tower? Principally, the roof is rotting and falling in. Without its protection, water is being continually absorbed by the lime and sand mortar of the upper brickwork, with the result that the joins between the bricks are softening. This, in turn, means that the heavy, carved sandstone blocks which once formed the lintel and uprights of the second floor doorway (to the staircase tower) have fallen. Without their support, all the brickwork above that doorway is now beginning to sag and will inevitably fall at some point.

One moment SDC say that they have no money for repairs, the next they say that they have men estimating the cost. Yet nothing happens - month after month - year after year. Now the officer in charge is being changed for the second time. We have to hope that his replacement will take a more persuasive view with the council than the two former incumbents.

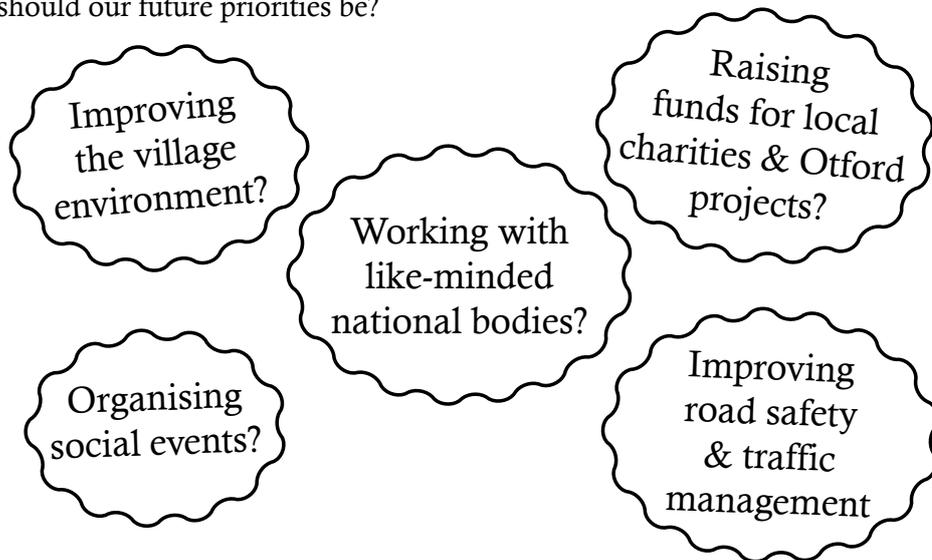
If SDC will not at least stop the deterioration of this iconic Otford landmark, then it may fall to the local community to take action and preserve it. What role should the Otford Society play in this work? Your views are welcome.

Rod Shelton

Otford Society Autumn Meeting

The Otford Society's Autumn Meeting will take place on Thursday 16th October at 8pm in the Otford Village Memorial Hall.

The meeting is open to everyone (not just members) and will provide an opportunity to discuss how the Society's resources should be directed. What should our future priorities be?



As members will know, the Otford Society's aim is to ensure that our village continues to be a fantastic place to live, with events that bring the whole village together, and thoughtful developments that benefit everyone. Please support this meeting and help us to achieve our goals.

November Nostalgia

Enjoy live music and partying with friends?

On Saturday 8th November at 8pm in the Otford Village Memorial Hall, there will be an Otford Society social with live music from Alibi, the female-fronted four piece band, who will be performing a wide range of pop and rock covers.



From...

- The Hollies to Jimi Hendrix
- David Bowie to Martha and the Muffins
- Stealers Wheel to The Rolling Stones

A licensed bar will be provided by The Crown.

Tickets cost £10 each, and are available now from The Mad Hatter's Emporium, Yvonne's Newsagent, The Crown and the Otford Parish Council Office. Alternatively, contact otfordsociety@otford.net for further details.

Otford Society Village Survey

To tie in with the discussion about the future direction of the Otford Society that is scheduled for the Autumn Meeting, we have organised a survey - which is open to both members and non-members.

You can participate in either of two ways:

- Online, by visiting <http://survey.otfordsociety.org.uk/> and following the instructions.
- On paper using the form on the opposite page, which can simply be cut out of the newsletter. (Alternatively, photocopies are acceptable!) If you run out of space to write comments, then feel free to attach additional sheets of paper. Completed surveys can be brought to the Autumn Meeting, or dropped into any of the Society's usual ticket-selling venues: Yvonne's Newsagent in Telston Lane, the Mad Hatter's Emporium on the High Street, or the Otford Parish Council Offices.

Whichever way you join in, there's no restriction on the number of entries you can make, so each person in a household can submit his/her own responses if desired.

We are really looking forward to hearing your views about the Society, so please do join in. Results will be featured in the next newsletter.

Phil Chapman



About You

1) How old are you? *(please tick one box)*

- Younger than 30 30-49 50-69 Older than 70 Prefer not to answer

2) For how long have you lived in Otford? *(please tick one box)*

- Less than 5 years 5-10 years 11-20 years 21-40 years More than 40 years
 I don't live in Otford

Society Events

3) How many Society events have you attended in the last three years? *(please tick one box)*

- None 1 or 2 3 or 4 5 or more All of them!
 I'm not a member

4) Which types of event interest you? *(tick as many boxes as you like)*

- Socials like the Garden Party & St George's Day lunch Socials with music/dance
 Meetings about local history Meetings about the natural environment
 Meetings about planning issues

Comments:

5) How many events would you like the Society to organise each year? *(please tick one box)*

- None 1 or 2 3 or 4 5 or more

6) Are the events the right duration? *(please tick one box)*

- Too short About right Too long

Comments:

The Newsletter

7) How interesting and informative do you find the newsletter? *(please tick one box)*

- Never read it Not very (less than 5 minutes reading) Quite (read about half of it)
 Very (read majority) Extremely (read it all)

Comments:

8) Which types of article interest you?

Please rank the options in order of preference, with 1 being the most interesting.

- Local history Village clubs/societies/sport Forthcoming events
 Planning Local people

Comments:

9) Is the Newsletter an appropriate length? *(please tick one box)*

- Too short About right Too long

Comments:

10) How many Newsletters would you like the Society to publish each year? *(please tick one box)*

- None 1 2 3 (current) 4 or more

Comments:

11) In what form should the Newsletter be published? *(please tick one box)*

- Paper, and downloadable PDF (current) Downloadable PDF only
 Online via a Society blog Online via social networking (e.g. Facebook)

Comments:

Society Activities & Funding

12) Towards what village developments should the Society direct its funds?

Please rank the options in order of preference, with 1 being the most important.

- Improving outdoor facilities like play areas & sports equipment
 Improving road safety and traffic management
 Improving local information/signage
 Improving the environment by planting trees, maintaining footpaths & green spaces
 Supporting endangered services like village toilets & transport for older residents
 Preserving/restoring local monuments like the Palace Tower

Comments:

13) Would you consider volunteering to help the Society with activities like the ones mentioned above?

(please tick one box) If yes, then please provide your name and contact details.

- No Yes

Planning

14) Which kinds of planning application do you believe should be monitored by the Society?

(tick as many boxes as you like)

- Residential developments of 2-4 properties
 Residential developments of 5 or more properties
 Commercial developments in the Conservation Area and/or Green Belt
 All commercial developments
 Change of use
 Road developments
 Other (please specify):

Comments:

15) When the Society's Committee is concerned about a proposed development, how do you feel it should proceed? *(please tick one box)*

- As it sees fit As decided by an online poll of members
 As decided by a meeting open to all members
 As decided by a face-to-face poll of a representative sample of members
 As decided by a face-to-face poll of all members
 Other (please specify):

Comments:

Hospices of Hope Events



hospicesofhope

• Classic Sinatra

Friday 10th October at 7.30pm

The Royal Wells Hotel, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8BE

Back by popular demand! Join us for a fabulous night of entertainment featuring Ian Gallagher, one of the UK's leading artists, who will be performing the music of 'old blue eyes'.

£40 per person, to include a drinks reception, two course dinner & coffee.

To book, contact Anna Perolls via anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or 525110.

• Otford Quiz Night

Saturday 1st November at 7pm

Hospices of Hope Otford Tea Rooms, Otford

£12 per person to include a light supper.

To book, contact Carole Ford via carole@hospicesofhope.co.uk or 525110.

• Pre-Christmas Party Night

Friday 21st November at 7.30pm

Rowhill Grange Hotel, Kent, BR8 7SQ

£30 per person, to include a fabulous three course gourmet dinner followed by coffee & mince pies; also an arrival drink and plenty of crackers and party poppers! During the evening there will be live music and also a disco where you can show off those dance moves!

To book, contact Anna Perolls via anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or 525110.

• Ladies Lunch with Christmas Market and Tea Expert

Thursday 27th November at midday (market open from 10am)

Rowhill Grange Hotel, Kent, BR8 7SQ

Come and enjoy a festive Christmas Market full of homemade goodies perfect for presents. Tea Expert Alex Probyn from Blends for Friends will be sharing his wealth of experience about tea, after a sumptuous lunch.

£27 per person to include a drink on arrival, two course lunch with a glass of wine, coffee & mints.

To book, contact Anna Perolls via anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or 525110.

• Christmas Wreath Workshop

Monday 8th December at 9am

Bessels Green Baptist Church Hall, TN13 2PS

£30 per person to include coffee and mince pies on arrival followed by lunch. All materials are supplied but please bring your own secateurs and gloves.

To book, contact Anna Perolls via anna@hospicesofhope.co.uk or 525110.

Membership Report

Collection of membership subscriptions is progressing as usual for this time of year. We have had to recruit a number of new Liaison Officers and are always looking for more volunteers.

As a few of you may know, I am retiring from the post of Membership Secretary at the end of this year. I have held this post for at least 15 years and it is time for someone younger to take up the reins. If anyone would be interested in taking on the job, please contact the Chairman, Keith Gofton.

My thanks go to all the Liaison Officers for their support over the years.

Please try to encourage your neighbours and friends to join the Society, especially new residents moving into the area. It is important to maintain our high level of support in the village, which adds weight to any arguments we may put to the local authorities on developments affecting our environment.

Vincent Tilley

Ladies' Football

Did you know that Otford has a Ladies Football Club? Welcoming all women footballers in the Sevenoaks area and beyond, Otford United Ladies Football Club is open to ladies of all ages (16+) and abilities, and is a great place to learn a new skill, get fit, and have fun.

The club is run by F.A.-qualified coaches Stuart and Amanda Cunningham, who also manage local teams at junior level. During the available season, coaching sessions usually run on Monday evenings at Otford Recreation Ground, and are pay-as-you-play at a cost of £5.

To find out more, please contact Stuart by calling 07850 676595 or emailing stuac@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer's Report

Our current position is that we are financially secure despite an operating deficit of £1,772, which is due to an exceptional expenditure of £3,000 to enable the installation of a vehicle speed display on Shoreham Road as well as a donation to £250 to the village defibrillator fund.

Account Balances	
Lloyds Current Account	£1,291
NSI Investment Account	£10,945
Lloyds Fixed Rate Bond	£10,180
Cash	£72
Stock (Gift Vouchers)	£25
Total Reserves	£22,513

Activities in 2014

The St. George's Day Lunch broke even, while the Society's stall at the village fête raised £251. As per the fête's terms, 40% (£100) of this has been donated to the fête committee.

The Garden Party raised £452, compared to £467 in 2013; attendance was just slightly down on 2013. The raffle was very successful, raising £215 - all of which will be donated to The Friends of Ifield School and Kent Air Ambulance. This compared to £122 raised in 2013.

Outlook to the end of 2014

Membership subscriptions of around £800 are still to be collected and these, combined with a new fund-raising and recruitment initiative planned for November, should improve our financial position at the year end, along with the annual payment of interest into our Investment Accounts. In terms of outgoing payments, the Society has agreed to fund the installation of two new information boards on Palace Field. Due to their quality and robustness, the cost of these will be in the region of £3,600. Overall, I expect the Society to end the year around £4,800 down on the start of the year, but still be left with very healthy reserves of around £19,485.

Derek Buck

The Committee

President:	Ken Gunderson	
Chairman:	Keith Gofton	chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk
Treasurer:	Derek Buck	treasurer@otfordsociety.org.uk
Secretary:	Ted Scott	secretary@otfordsociety.org.uk
Membership Secretary:	Vincent Tilley	membership@otfordsociety.org.uk
Newsletter Editor:	Phil Chapman	newsletter@otfordsociety.org.uk
Newsletter Distribution:	Elisabeth Lindsay	distribution@otfordsociety.org.uk

Also: Andrea Kelly & Penelope Winter

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 11th October	Twinning Association's coach trip to Hardelot
Thursday 16th October	Oxford Society Autumn Meeting
Sunday 26th October	British Summer Time ends
Saturday 8th November	November Nostalgia - live music with Alibi
Sunday 9th November	Remembrance Sunday
Saturday 22nd November	St. Bartholomew's Christmas Market
Sunday 30th November	Oxford Christmas Shopping Festival
Thursday 26th March	Oxford Society Annual General Meeting
Sunday 29th March	British Summer Time begins
Thursday 23rd April	St. George's Day

To list events in the next newsletter, email newsletter@otfordsociety.org.uk

Annual Subscriptions

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

The Oxford Society

www.oxford.info/oxfordsociety oxfordsociety@oxford.net

Registered with the Civic Trust

Affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England

Registered charity 272974

Next Newsletter: Spring 2015