



# The Otford Village Society

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## Autumn 2015 Newsletter

*We have a busy and exciting schedule of Autumn events:*

**A Night at the Races - Saturday 10th October**

**Autumn Meeting, with Kent Air Ambulance - Thursday 15th October**

**Magic for all the Family - Saturday 28th November**

### Chairman's Message

As you all will know, our Society is one of the largest amenity societies in the country, and is bigger than those of many towns and cities. However we still only represent a proportion of the village, and our wish to address this has fuelled this year's drive to recruit more members from all age groups and areas of the village. As a committee, we know that having more members will bring wider representation, more influence, and increased community spirit.

The delivery of the Summer newsletter to every home in the village brought in quite a few new members, but a personal introduction is always best so, whenever you meet someone new, please promote the Society.

To broaden the Society's appeal, we have been busy organising social events to complement our usual gatherings. So in addition to the formal Autumn Meeting on 15th October, when Kent Air Ambulance will give a presentation, there will be a Race Night on 10th October and an evening of magic on 28th November. Further details are in this newsletter; please do come along.

On the business side, the Society is supporting residents over Network Rail's planned closure of the pedestrian level crossing and its replacement with a footbridge (see page 3). We are also investigating how best to use our available funding for trees in the village, perhaps by contributing to the work needed to address the recently-discovered problems with local Ash trees. Additionally, we have a list of village improvement projects that we intend to progress.

Derek Buck, our treasurer, has advised us that he intends to retire from his position by the end of 2016, after 20 years of sterling service to the Society. We are looking for someone to take on this role - and the sooner we can find someone, the sooner Derek can start the handover process. Derek assures us that the task is not onerous and you do not need to be an accountant! If you might be able to help, please email [treasurer@otfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@otfordsociety.org.uk)

Finally, we still have vacancies on the committee, as well as for delivery and liaison officers, so if you're motivated to get involved in protecting and improving our lovely village then please email me at [chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk) for further information.

I hope to see you at some of our forthcoming events.

*Keith Gofton*

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### About Us

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

We are always looking for projects to fund which will benefit the whole community. Please email ideas to [otfordsociety@otford.net](mailto:otfordsociety@otford.net)

# Our thanks to the Society's outgoing President - Kenneth Leon Gunderson

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I have been asked to pen some words about Ken, as he steps down from his role as the Society's President. His many years of devoted service - not only to the Society, but also to the wider village community - must not pass without an acknowledgement of the many successful ventures that he has organised. It is regrettable that Ken's poor hearing has now forced him to resign his post.

Ken and Jean Gunderson arrived in Otford in 1957 to take up residence in one of the new houses just completed in Knighton Road; they have lived at No.37 for going on sixty years. At the time, Ken was working for the BBC.

I first met Ken in his role as Chairman of the Otford Allotments Association. Ken has always been a keen gardener, and I quickly sensed his enthusiasm for this pastime, and his desire to help a newcomer get on the right path. When I became a member of the Society – around 1990 – the committee meetings were held in Ken and Jean's living room. We had the luxury of sitting in lovely armchairs or on the settee, and Jean would serve us with coffee and biscuits at about 8pm. Ken had his agenda and we would move from item to item, never leaving a stone unturned. Ken gave everything his most careful consideration – nothing was ever too much trouble.

Ken and Jean are keen on amateur dramatics, and have had a long association with the Otford Players, taking part in most of their productions over several decades. Occasionally, Ken has linked his love of drama with his role as Chairman (and later President) of the Society in order to produce staged productions featuring aspects of Otford village life in past times. These productions have always been received with much enthusiasm by residents.

Ken's first production was in 1999, when he got together singers, dancers and actors in short sketches - calling it "*The End of the Century Show*". In the years that followed came other shows, written and directed by Ken, with each focusing on a major national event. In 2005 we had "*Trafalgar Remembered*"; in 2007 it was "*Otford Remembered*". To celebrate "England's finest hour", Ken produced a script punctuated by songs of the time, which he called "*1940 Remembered*". Most recently, to mark the hundred years 1914-2014, he produced a very moving story about Otford in the years before 1914, calling it "*The Calm Before the Storm*". This was staged on two occasions in the Methodist Church.

Ken's life-long involvement with the Methodist Church is the driving force behind his desire to promote community events. He enjoys bringing people together so that they can share an experience – whether it be a play, a song, a picture, or some other form of imaginative expression. Any stimulus will do in order to spark people's interest.

For the last ten or more years, Ken has brought together forty or more residents to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday and St. George's Day on April 23rd. For this, we have dined in The Woodman, thanks to Jim the landlord.

Let us not forget that it is Ken we have to thank for the mosaic which features prominently in the centre of our village. When Ken first mentioned the idea at a Society committee meeting, some of us were quite sceptical because of the amount of money needed. He pursued his idea regardless, raised the money in a variety of ways, and the result is a spectacular and fascinating display of which we can all be very proud.

I have by no means given an exhaustive account of all that Ken has done for Otford; please excuse any serious omissions. At a personal level, I am indebted to Ken for allowing me to be involved in his adventures by asking me to arrange the music. When I came to Otford, I had recently retired from a life heavily involved in music - little did I realise that I was going to start all over again!

To conclude, I'd like to express on behalf of all the members of the Otford Village Society, and indeed on behalf of the whole local community, our sincere thanks to Ken for all that he has achieved for our village. Thanks also go to Jean who has given him such marvellous support throughout. I will conclude by reminding you of the closing line of Ken's poem about his village: "*A village in Kent with a pond.*"

Tony Wiltshire

# Otford Railway Pedestrian Level Crossing

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On 21st August, the Otford Village Society facilitated a meeting between Network Rail, parish councillors, district councillors, county councillors, and residents in order to discuss Network Rail's plan to replace the existing pedestrian level crossing near Otford Station with a footbridge. The meeting was requested when the Society sent its objection to Sevenoaks District Council, after Network Rail submitted their formal planning application in June - and was deemed particularly necessary because the final plans differed noticeably from the drafts displayed by Network Rail during their public consultation meeting at the Village Hall back in January.

During the session, which lasted for two-and-a-half hours, Network Rail presented their detailed reasoning behind the proposed closure of the level crossing, and the various options which were considered before arriving at the current footbridge design. A robust discussion followed, especially in relation to the planned felling of six tall, mature trees that currently provide sight and sound protection for nearby residents.

It was concluded and agreed that Network Rail would:

- Share their 'Narrative Risk Assessment' so that villagers can fully understand why Network Rail want the change.
- Look at the alternative options of...
  - » installing Miniature Stop Lights.
  - » installing raising barriers, with safe refuges.
  - » a different footbridge design that avoids felling trees (although villagers still oppose any footbridge).

The Network Rail representatives were thanked for their attendance, patience and responses to the questions asked.

*Keith Gofton*

## A Night at the Races

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A night at the races is a fun way for the whole family to spend an evening, and the Otford Village Society is hoping that this new addition to its event programme will attract newcomers as well as existing members.

The event takes place on Saturday 10th October and the venue is the Otford Village Memorial Hall, which will be set out with tables and chairs as well as a big screen on which to watch the races. A 'race card' is provided from which you pick a horse name you like, or your favourite number, or one that you think will win the race, and you place your bet. A pre-recorded race is then shown and - if you are lucky and your horse does well - you collect your prize. Bets are fixed at £1 each so, if you bet on a horse in each of the evening's eight races, your maximum spend would be just £8.

A fish and chip supper is included in the £10 ticket price; please bring your own drinks and glasses. As a bonus, there will be a fun quiz with a prize during the interval while supper is served.

Tickets are available now:

- From Yvonne's newsagent in Telston Lane
- From the new Otford Emporium by the duck pond
- From the Parish Council Offices
- Via the web at <http://www.wegottickets.com/event/330449>
- By emailing the Society at [chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk)
- By calling 07770 160266

Doors open at 6.30pm. The event will start at 7pm and end at approximately 10pm. Do come and join in the fun!

## Autumn Meeting

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The Otford Village Society will hold its regular Autumn Meeting on Thursday 15th October, from 8pm in the Memorial Hall.

Attendees at our Garden Party will already know that we donate the proceeds of our raffle there to Kent Air Ambulance, and representatives of this organisation have kindly agreed to come and speak at our meeting, about their operation and good work.



After the usual refreshment break, committee members will also provide updates on this year's activities.

Whilst the meeting is for members, new recruits are welcome to join on the night - the annual subscription is only £5 per home and you will be supporting the Society in its efforts to maintain and improve village life.

## Magic Evening

The final event of the Society's 2015 calendar has got the committee really excited. On the evening of Saturday 28th November from 7pm, we will be hosting in the Otford Village Memorial Hall a fantastic display of stage and close-up magic by renowned local magician Robert Pound.

Robert has earned the highest grade a magician can get within The Magic Circle (Associate of The Inner Magic Circle with silver star), has performed for celebrities including Sir Paul McCartney and Chris Tarrant, and has also appeared on TV - for example in the recent revival of TFI Friday - so you can be sure that his show will amaze and astound.

Robert's show for the Society will be completely family-friendly and, as well as the main event of a stage show (which will offer plenty of opportunities for volunteers!), he will also be roaming the Hall and surprising visitors with tricks and mystifying close-up routines.

Tickets will be available from mid-October via the same routes as Race Night tickets (*see page 3*) and will cost £10 per adult or £5 per child (16 or under). Don't miss the chance to have your mind blown by this truly astonishing show!

### Annual Subscription

£5 per household

We are now collecting members' email addresses, so we can send information about forthcoming events and keep you informed about issues that affect the village.

To join our mailing list, please send your name, email address and street address to [membership@otfordsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@otfordsociety.org.uk) Your personal information will never be given or sold to third parties.

## The Committee & Volunteers

<b>Chairman:</b>	<b>Keith Gofton</b> <a href="mailto:chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk">chairman@otfordsociety.org.uk</a>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Derek Buck</b> <a href="mailto:treasurer@otfordsociety.org.uk">treasurer@otfordsociety.org.uk</a>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Ted Scott</b> <a href="mailto:secretary@otfordsociety.org.uk">secretary@otfordsociety.org.uk</a>
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<b>December Event Coordinator</b>	<b>Diana Adams</b>
Planning Advisor	Rod Shelton
Walks Leaflets Distribution	Sheila Bonnet
Walks Leaflets Coordinator	Carol Griffiths
Marketing & Publicity Officer	VACANCY
Civic Voice Columnist	VACANCY

## Garden Party Review



This year's Garden Party was held on Saturday 18th July at Russell House School. Although the afternoon had been sunny, the evening was unfortunately overcast. Nevertheless, the rain stayed away throughout the event, attendance was good, and the guests enjoyed themselves.



In the end, the raffle raised over £130 for Kent Air Ambulance, while ticket sales brought a profit of over £250 for the Society - which will be used to help fund various future initiatives.

### The Otford Village Society

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**Next Newsletter: Spring 2016**