Chairman’s Report

Hopefully by the time you read this report the floods will have dispersed and our lives will have returned to some sort of normality. But like a lot of gardeners, I am still waiting for Winter to arrive. There will obviously be lessons to be learnt from the recent events, but it’s absolutely no good playing the blame game retrospectively for an event that happens once or twice in a lifetime. Otford had a store of sandbags and distributed them according to the priorities dictated by SDC. Their main usage was to prevent any overspill from the river or run-off from roads. Unfortunately run-off affecting residents back gardens was not considered as critical, although obviously of concern to those residents affected. Thanks go to Kent Highways who have been called out a number of times and unblocked the culvert across the road at the end of Rye Lane where a tributary that feeds the river Darent was overflowing.

One area I can report on with any certainty is the Parish budget. Over the past three years OPC has tried very hard to keep its running costs to a minimum by ensuring that some of the smaller projects can be completed in-house at zero cost, i.e. carried out by Councillors or friends volunteering to give up their time. However, we are now very limited in areas where we can trim costs and save on our expenditure. One project that we have been planning is widening the path from the High Street into the car park. Therefore having carefully considered the situation we have decided that it will now have to be put back by a couple of years. Another area that is a major expense are the toilets; on average they are costing the council £7-8k/year to run. Last year we considered closing them but we received several letters requesting that they remained open. I am not sure how long this situation will last. The net effect is that although we have tried to keep OPC’s part of the Council Tax down as far as practicable we have ended up with an effective increase of 5% in the band D which is a rise of £4.18 per YEAR ie. less than a packet of cigarettes or a glass of wine. It should be noted that OPC is not responsible for any increase in the Council Tax likely to be imposed by SDC, KCC, the Fire Service or Kent Police.

Just in case you are wondering what we spend your money on, here are a few examples of the Parishes’ community responsibilities – Allotments; the Village Green and the Pond; the car park; the cemetery; the community woodlands; children’s play areas; the recreation grounds; the tennis courts; the Parish office
and Heritage Centre; the newsletters; litter bins, dog bins; seats (benches); the public toilets; bus shelters and litter collection from Parish lands. On top of that we operate an Emergency Team and an effective Speedwatch scheme. We are also consulted on all planning matters.

Unfortunately as I reported last month, Cllr. Richard Knight has had to retire from the council for personal reasons. Our thanks go to Richard for all his hard work on behalf of all Otfordians which really was appreciated. However, that now leaves us short on the council, so we are asking for all you budding DIY diplomats to put your name forward to OPC with a short CV and your reasons for wishing to be a Councillor before 3rd March so that we can consider the various merits of candidates at our 10th March meeting.

Community Warden Surgery
Paul holds his weekly surgery to discuss any problems and community issues at School House on Tuesdays between 11am and 12 noon. Come and see him. Paul can also be contacted on 07813 713366.

Saturday Coffee Morning
DON’T FORGET! If you happen to be in the village on a Saturday morning between 10:30 and 12:00 you can get a cup of coffee in the village for just 50p in the Club Room at the Village Memorial Hall. (And we throw in a biscuit for free as well!!) Quite a number of village residents turn up every week so why not come and meet friends and neighbours and help to support your local village hall at the same time. We hope to see you there soon.

For One Night Only - an Evening of Fun, Food & Frolics
On Saturday 15th March at 7.30pm in Otford Village Memorial Hall the Otford Players will be hosting a One Night Only evening. There will be a 2 course hot meal with a serviced bar, a one act comedy, a musical interlude and a few surprises thrown in! Tickets are £10 per person and available from 01959 525404 or otfordplayers@otford.net

Talk at Otford Library
On Tuesday 25th March at 7.30pm at Otford Library Ian Walker will be giving talks on four separate testimonies from WW1 soldier’s experiences, including two soldiers from Kent. Tickets are £3. Booking is essential on 01959 522488. Also on Saturday 15th March there is a FREE Craft Activity session from 10am to 12 noon. Call 01959522488 to book a place.

Sevenoaks Book Fair
The next Sevenoaks Book Fair will take place on Saturday 22nd March in Otford Village Memorial Hall between 9am and 2.30pm - Free admission. Refreshments available.

Active Kids Vouchers
SAINSBURY’S are now issuing their Active Kids Vouchers until Tuesday 20th May and the 15th Otford (Sevenoaks) Scout Group, comprising Beavers, Cubs and Scout are collecting these and would like to receive any that are issued. There is a collection box in the entrance hall of the Scout Hut or you can hand to any member of the group. Over the last few years the group have benefited with various games, first aid and map reading equipment that are used by all sections. Any vouchers will be gratefully received and used for the benefit of the entire group and it would be fantastic if they could get more than last year’s total of 5,000 vouchers.
Kemsing Singers - 'Ring out Wild Bells'
On [Saturday 5th April] at 7.30pm in St Bartholomew’s Church, Otford - Kemsing Singers invite you to an exhilarating evening of popular sacred music including the Mass in G major by Schubert with Rebecca Hunt - Soprano, Peter Young - Organ and the Tamarisk Quartet. The concert is directed by Sara Kemsley. Tickets cost £10 from 01959 523752 or Sheila Dickerson on 01959 524183. There will be a retiring collection for the church reordering fund.

Darent Valley Choir
The Darent Valley Choir will be holding their Spring concert in the Church of St Mary’s Platt on [Saturday 12th April] at 7.30pm. There will be a varied programme of music including the lovely Faure’s Requiem. Tickets will be available nearer the time from the Sevenoaks Bookshop and from the website darentvalleychoir.com. Cost is £12 or children under 16 will pay £5. They hope you can join them and support one of your local choirs.

Voce Chamber Choir Concert
On [Saturday 3rd May] at 7.30pm in St Bartholomew’s Church there will be a concert by VOCE (Voices of Cambridge Ensemble). These highly talented singers came together as choristers at Trinity College, Cambridge and they have been augmented by family and friends. They have a wide repertoire and the evening will be a musical treat to remember. Tickets are £8 and will be available from the Parish Church office and Parish Council office. Proceeds will go towards the re-ordering appeal.

Singing for Pleasure
‘SINGING FOR PLEASURE’ run by Danny Kingshill from Shoreham invites you to a free Open Evening on [Tuesday 25th March] at 7.30pm. Go along and listen or sing with them. New voices are always welcome in their relaxed and friendly group. They meet at Walthamstow Hall Junior School, Bradbourne Park Road. For more details please contact 01732 460578.

Otford Gardeners Society - The Spring Show
On [Saturday 29th March] at 2.15pm they will be holding their Spring Show in Otford Village Memorial Hall. On display will be the best of the spring flowers. There are also photographs, cookery and flower arrangements classes on show. Homemade teas will be on sale until 4pm. Admission is 50p.

Gardeners’ Society
On [Tuesday 1st April] Vanessa Jones will be giving a talk on ‘Vegetables and Fruit growing for the table’. Admission which includes refreshments is £1 for visitors. Contact Janet Finney on 01959 523760 for more details or e-mail gardeners@otford.net

Otford & District Historical Society
The next meeting of 2014 will take place on [Wednesday 19th March] when Nick Fothergill will talk about ‘John Law: 18th Century philanderer, gambler, murderer and father of modern finance.’ Membership of the Society is £6 and visitors are £2.
Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau will now be holding a surgery at the Otford Parish Council offices every Tuesday between 10am and 12 noon. To book please call 01732 440488 and say that you would like an appointment in Otford. You can also drop in for advice but you may have to wait. This weekly service will be available for 3 months on a trial basis.

Otford Oast WI

The meetings take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month starting at 9.30am in Otford Village Memorial Hall. The next meeting is on 20th March when Jacquie Robinson will be making Easter Cards. Do join them. Contact Julie Stevens on 01732 458732 for more details.

Otford Evening WI

The next meeting is on Thursday 13th March at 7.30pm and members will be hearing of the ‘History of Fragrances’ from Virginia Daniau. Meetings are held in the Club Room of the Village Hall. For more information please contact Evelyn Hubner on 01959 523359.

Otford Remembered - 1914 - Community Choir

2014 sees the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War ‘Otford Remembered - 1914’ is a dramatic presentation to take place in May. It gives a glimpse of life in Britain and Otford at that time before the outbreak of war. The Otford Community Choir will sing songs of the era - many of them still familiar to us. They are now starting to rehearse on Fridays at 7.30pm in the Library. If you would like to join them please go along. Contact Tony Wiltshire on 01959 524887 for more information.

Otford-Neufchatel-Hardelot Twinning

The next social gathering will take place at The Woodman on Monday 24th March from 7.45pm. Do join them. They are looking forward to welcoming their ‘twins’ at Hever Castle and in Otford on Saturday 3rd May. Let Jane Lawrey know via the Parish Council office if you would like to join the group visiting Hever Castle.

Sevenoaks Embroiderer’s Guild

The next meeting will take place on Saturday 29th March in St Bartholomew’s Church Hall, High Street (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE). The meetings start at 10am and 2pm and end with tea and cakes at about 4pm. For further information please contact Sylvia Grafton on 01732 452117.

Sevenoaks Amateur Boxing Club

On Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th March between 12noon and 6pm the Sevenoaks Amateur Boxing Club are hosting the Southern Counties Schoolboy Championship and also their OPEN BOXING SHOW on the Saturday night from 7pm in the Sevenoaks Community Centre, Otford Road, Sevenoaks. Cost is £10 per person for all day.

If you fancy having a go at boxing then training takes place at the club on the Gaza Industrial Estate, Weald, TN11 8PL on Mondays and Wednesdays between 5.30pm and 7.00pm for Juniors (8 - 15yr) and 7.30pm - 9.00pm for Seniors (16yrs upwards). They also run a ‘Fat Dads’ session and ladies boxersize. For further information on session times and prices please contact Paul Lynch on 07939 707333 or look at the website www.sevenoaksboxingclub.co.uk
**Spring Workshop**

Following on from her very popular Christmas Wreath making evening Denise Thompson Otford’s own designer florist will be holding a Spring Workshop in Otford Village Memorial Hall on **Wednesday 9th April** at 7pm. Cost £30. Everything will be provided (except scissors /secateurs - please bring your own). Please ring 01959 525009 to book.

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**Otford Methodist Church**

Want to find out more about Life, Faith and God? To seek answers why not join our next ALPHA Course. The course, over 11 evenings will start on **Wednesday 19th March** at our Hall. For more information or to book please call Ann Suaznabar on 01732 762872 or ann.suaznabar@gmail.com

Also Otford Methodist Church would like to invite you to join their Ladies Breakfast on **Saturday 15th March**. Their speaker is Kalbi Massey who born a Sikh, has a remarkable story of healing and change of heart. Come and hear about her journey. Breakfast starts at 8.30am in the Methodist Hall and costs just £5. For more information contact Sue Ward on 01959 535099.

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**Otford Methodist Church Wednesday Afternoon Women’s Fellowship**

Meetings are at 2.30pm in the Church Hall. Phone Rosemary Cracknell on 01959 522325 for details / transport.

**March**

7th - Woman’s World Day of Prayer at St Bart’s at 2pm / 12th - ‘Music and the Bible’ - Anne Miller
19th - ‘My day as an Olympic Torch Bearer’ - Brenda Cordingley / 26th - Lunch Out

**April**

2nd - ‘What’s in a name?’ - Trevor Harvey / 9th - Easter meditation

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**Picture of the Month March – April**

Sheila Dickerson has lived in Otford for the past 38 years. Having spent many years of her life developing all aspects of embroidery, Sheila then felt the need to give expression to a deep urge to discover how to draw and paint flowers. Some years ago she started attending a class at the Adult Education Centre where she spent the next few years learning different approaches to water colour painting. She was then introduced to a Botanical Art class where she was greatly encouraged to refine her skills in the field of Botanical Art. As a member of the Otford Art Group Sheila enjoys combining calligraphy skills with her botanical work to create pleasing designs.

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**Knole Decorative and Fine Art Society**

Knole Decorative and Fine Arts Society meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Sevenoaks Community Centre, Bat & Ball. The lectures start promptly at 1.45 pm and finish by 3 pm. The next meeting will be on **20th March** when Malcolm Kenwood will be talking about ‘Hans Van Meegeren’. Linking to a study tour to Delft to see the works of Vermeer, this lecture explores the extraordinary life of Van Meegeren, a Dutch artist and forger who was renowned as the man who made Vermeers, committing the most lucrative, audacious art fraud of the 20th Century. Anyone interested in attending a lecture or joining the Society, please contact Yvonne Stewart on 01732 457852 or email knoledfas@gmail.com

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**The RSPB’s Natural Secrets**
It’s not only birds that benefit from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Birds works. In this illustrated talk by Peter Holden MBE on **Thursday 6th March** at 7.45pm in Otford Village Memorial Hall he will look at many of the other forms of wildlife that can be found on and around their reserves - from rare hoverflies to magnificent red deer and from angel-wings fungus to the Scottish primrose. Some are common if you know where to look, but others are rare and depend on the RSPB for their future in the UK. With over 13,000 species of wildlife found on the reserves no visit should ever be dull - even when the birds don’t show. For more information please contact Jean Nobbs on 01959 563530.

**Police Contact Point**

The mobile police van will be visiting the High Street car park on Wednesdays between 12noon and 1.00pm for residents to discuss any policing issues and get crime prevention advice. The next dates are **11th March and 26th March**.

If you want to report a non-urgent crime or contact your local officer please call 101.

**Breathe Easy with New Air Alert Service**

Sevenoaks District Council has launched a new Air Alert Service, an automated service available to anyone living in Sevenoaks District who suffers from a respiratory condition including COPD or asthma. The **FREE** service enables people to register to receive air quality alerts to give them prior notice when air quality is poor or deteriorating, which may cause them to have breathing difficulties. This then enables them to make informed decisions about whether they should go out when they know the air quality is going to be poor, close their windows or to take extra medication out with them.

Once registered the information is sent by text message, telephone voice message or email. People registered for similar services in other areas said that this has helped them to manage their symptoms and found it very useful. One GP in Devon has seen emergency hospital admissions relating to respiratory conditions reduce by up to 82%.

**To register for free Air Alerts, visit** [www.airalert.info](http://www.airalert.info) **or telephone 01732 227000. Email alan.eagles@sevenoaks.gov.uk for further information.**

The service is delivered by Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with Kings College London and the Sussex Air Quality Group.

**Hi Kent - the local charity for the deaf and hard of hearing**

HI KENT is a registered charity for deaf and hard of hearing people. Established since 1986, they received the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service in 2007. Their aim is to provide a full range of services that meet the needs of anyone with hearing difficulties, and those who have an interest in their welfare. Free advice and help is available to everyone. Hi Kent works in partnership with Kent County Council, who provide funding that enables us to carry out assessments of need for people over 65 years old on their behalf. We also work closely with Primary Care Trusts. Following assessment, equipment to meet eligible needs may be available through Kent County Council. Their staff can also provide independent and impartial advice, information, signposting and referral to other Council services available in your area. They have fully stocked Resource Centre in Maidstone, which is part funded by KCC. A full range of assistive equipment is on show and can be demonstrated by expert staff at the centre. All clients can try out the equipment and decide which item best meets their needs. Please make an appointment with the Resource Centre you want to visit if you wish to try out equipment so they can ensure that staff are available to discuss your needs and demonstrate equipment to help you. If you have equipment needs that are not eligible for free provision following assessment, they will be happy to supply these at modest cost, as they are a not-for-profit organisation, or advise you of alternative suppliers. Hi
Kent also runs a network of more than 200 hearing aid aftercare clinics in towns, villages and communities all over Kent, where people can have NHS hearing aids cleaned, retubed and replacement batteries supplied and fitted. All services provided by them through the clinics are free of charge and no appointments are necessary. If you would like some help or advice contact them on tel. 01622 691151, fax. 01622 672436, text. 07795 951466 or email enquiries@hikent.org.uk.

Planning

The following applications have been considered by the Parish Council. For more information, please contact the Parish Clerk or Sevenoaks District Council, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent on 01732 227000.

a. New applications

SE/13/03814   15 Tudor Crescent
Demolition of garage and rear porch and erection of a two storey side extension and single storey rear extension with five roof lights and additional parking to front.
SE/14/00041   Orchard Field, Leonard Avenue
Erection of cricket net practice facility
SE/13/03875   Orchard Cottage, 11 Colets Orchard
Erection of garage with extended drive area (retrospective application - revised garage design to permission 13/01943)
SE/14/00132   9 Knighton Road
Erection of a single storey front, side and rear extension and alteration to fenestration
SE/14/00163   5 Ryecroft Road
Erection of a first floor extension to existing ground floor and porch
SE/14/00201   20 Rye Lane
Erection of a single storey front extension
SE/14/00296   21 High Street
Removal of existing chimney stack to be replaced with slates to match existing

b. Results received

SE/13/03215   Little Coombe, Shoreham Road
Demolition of existing dwelling with Juliet balcony to rear elevation  Refused
SE/13/3029    Otford Primary School
Proposed hard standing playground including removal of some existing trees and planting of new trees  Allowed
SE/13/02683   Darenth House, 60 High Street
Change of use of ground floor offices to showroom and alterations to fenestration to include a glazed opening to west/east elevation, glazed openings to south elevation, new entrance to north elevation with wheelchair ramp access and three new lights.  Allowed
SE/13/03338   Willoughby Cottage, 10, Coombe Road
Demolition of front bay window and part demolition to rear utility room. Extension of roof height to facilitate habitable rooms in roofspace to include six velux windows and two dormer windows with balconies on rear elevation. Alteration to roof to include pitched roof over utility room on north elevation. Alteration to front porch on south elevation to include pitched roof to porch and dining room. Alterations to external fenestration  Allowed
SE/13/03537   47, Pilgrims Way West
Demolition of existing two storey dwelling and garaging and construction of new two storey dwelling with attached double garage (re-submission SE/13/02458)  Allowed
SE/13/03483   The Oast House, Broughton Manor
The erection of a two bay garage  Allowed
SE/13/03595  52B Pilgrims Way East
Demolition of existing dwelling and three outbuildings; erection of replacement dwelling with integral garaging facilities with raised timber decking and external steps  Refused

c. Appeals
SE/13/03220  Land to the south of 77-79 Pilgrims Way West
Erection of a 2 bed detached chalet bungalow with integral garage and 6 solar panels to south elevation. Also two 3/4 bed detached houses each with integral garages and 4 solar panels on the flat sections of their roofs. All properties to be accessed from Orchard Road.  Allowed
d. Tree work
SE/14/00212  7 Bubblestone Road
Reduce back 1 Goat Willow tree by 20% to the rear of the property

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<th>Parish Councillors Contact Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>John Edwards-Winser</td>
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<td>Oastbrook, Telston Lane</td>
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<td><strong>Councillors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas G. Cracknell</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Warham Road</td>
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<td>522325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Mary Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Tudor Crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mary.a.evans@btinternet.com">mary.a.evans@btinternet.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Jackie Howe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Pilgrims Way West</td>
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<tr>
<td>525434</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. H. Jane Lawrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Tudor Crescent</td>
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<tr>
<td>522360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howard Leicester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albany, Shoreham Road</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:howard_leicester@btconnect.com">howard_leicester@btconnect.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Charmian Marsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 Greenhill Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>522609</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jon Verrall</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Pilgrims Way East</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jon.verrall5@btinternet.com">jon.verrall5@btinternet.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Elizabeth J. Ward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thymebank, Coombe Road</td>
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<td>522384</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin J. Whitehead</td>
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<td>19 Coombe Road</td>
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<th>Rubbish and Garden Bags</th>
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Garden waste bag packs are available from the Parish Council office at £13 for 25. It avoids all those trips to the tip. Rolls of black sacks at £1.50 and white sacks at 50p are also available. The correct change would be much appreciated.

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The deadline for all items for the April newsletter will be Monday 24th March

Don't forget that the clocks go forward on SUNDAY 30th MARCH and it is also Mothers Day