

Otford Parish Council November Newsletter 2003 No 117

Kent and South & South East England
Village of the Year 2002

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Tree of Light



This Christmas the Tulip tree on the Village Green



will be used once again as a 'Tree of Light' to raise money for The Hospice in The Weald. A donation in honour or in memory of a loved one will sponsor a tree light. Labels for you to write on your message are available from the Parish Council Office. The Tree of Light Service will take place on **Friday 12th December** at 7.30pm at the Tree and will be followed at 8.00pm with the traditional United Churches Carols around the Christmas tree on the Green. Seasonal refreshments following these events will be offered in The Vicarage.

Guide Christmas Post Box



The Christmas Guide Post Box will be in Otford Library between Tuesday 2nd December and Friday 19th December inclusive, during opening hours. Stamps are 15p. The Christmas cards will be delivered in the village of Otford by the Guides. This year proceeds will be in aid of Sight Savers International. 3rd Otford Guides will be taking part in the London and SE Region challenge to trek from The London Eye to the Eiffel Tower (Eye2Ei) in Feb 2004. If you are aged between 10-14/15 and interested in joining the Guides then please contact Jane Lawrey on 01959 522360.

Community Production



The Village Community Players, a 'one off' group of actors both experienced and inexperienced present

'JOE CARPENTER & SON'

an English Nativity Play by Graham Clarke on

Fri 28th and Sat 29th November at 8pm

The production takes place in St Bartholomew's Church. Supported by the W.I. District and Primary School Choirs, the play is directed by Tibbs Finch with the able assistance of a most helpful body of volunteers from the local community. The play takes a somewhat wry look at an age-old story and promises a most enjoyable evening in the Parish Church.

Admission is by programme priced at £5 or £2.50 with restricted viewing (children 5 and under free). Programmes are available from 01959 525468. These are charity performances in aid of St Bartholomew's Church and Hospice in The Weald.

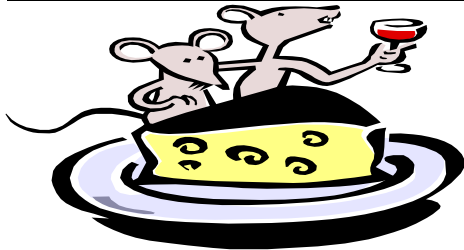


St Bartholomew's Christmas Events

- ◆ Christingle: Sunday 7th December at 3.30pm in Church.
- ◆ Choir Concert: Sunday 14th December at 7.30pm in Church.
- ◆ Nativity Play by Sunday School Children: Sunday 21st December at 11.10am in Village Hall.
- ◆ Service of Nine Lessons and Carols: Sunday 21st December at 6.30pm followed by seasonal refreshments in the Church Hall.

Christmas cards from the Churches in Otford, listing all the church services over the Christmas period, will be delivered to every house in the Parish from the middle of December.

Otford & District Wine Club



On **Wednesday 26th November 2003** Hugh Darrington will be giving a talk to The Otford & District Wine Club entitled *'Eating and Drinking to Live Longer'* Hugh edits a magazine totally dedicated to the absorbing subject of food and drink and he has travelled extensively sampling food in many countries including China and Japan so it will be an entertaining and informative talk. As usual the Club will be meeting in the Otford Memorial Hall and the evening begins at 8pm. Cheese and biscuits will be provided but members and visitors should bring their own liquid refreshment. It is free to members, but visitors will be charged a small fee.

The Wine Club has started selling tickets (price £17 to non members and £14 to members) for their Christmas Social on Saturday 13th December 2003. This comprises a three-course Christmas Dinner with coffee and mints, a welcome glass of sherry, live music and a raffle. Please ring the Secretary on 01732 761359 if you would like tickets and the dinner menu but please hurry to avoid disappointment

Village Design Statement Questionnaire

Have you expressed your views on the future of our village? Your opinions will influence the development of our Village Design Statement that will become part of local planning guidance. The completed questionnaires distributed with last month's newsletter are needed back by 1st December. They can be returned using the blue boxes at The Post Office, Telston Stores or the Parish Council office. If you no longer have the questionnaire a new copy in printable or emailable form can be obtained at www.otford.org/vds. More information about the VDS can be found on this page. The VDS Committee look forward to your input.

Two copies of the questionnaire around 3000 in total were delivered and so far, the total number of completed questionnaires returned is about 300 – a pitiful response! If you have lost your questionnaire, you can pick up more at the above locations.

Sevenoaks Embroiderers Guild

The Sevenoaks Embroiderers Guild are holding an exhibition at Otford Memorial Hall on **Saturday 29th November** between 2-4pm. There will also be refreshments a raffle and craft stalls. Admission is free.

Shoreham Play Group



Shoreham Playgroup welcomes all under 5's from babies to pre-schoolers and those who look after them, whether you are a new mum or an experienced nanny! The group is one of the last village playgroups in the area and have new babies as well as regulars from many other villages between Otford and Halstead and beyond. The group meets on Mondays in Shoreham Village Hall between 9.15am – 11.35am and they are open all year round including the school holidays. They offer weekly play and activities for the children and a bit of a breather among good company for the grown ups. The children are served a healthy mid-morning snack and there are hot drinks for the adults. They also have regular visitors such as a children's hairdresser and the health visitor who holds monthly clinics for weighing and advice – it's a more leisurely way of seeing her than queuing up at the doctors! There are special events throughout the year too with picnics, parties, outings and lots more.

Very soon you can save money on a terrific Christmas gift for the grandparents (and you) when the family photographer is there on 24th November. The sitting will only cost £15 and includes a classy black and white mounted print. Or join them for bucks fizz and a morning tea party for the children when Santa visits with a sack full of presents on December 15th.

To provisionally book for the above or for any other information, call Sarah on 01959 522556. Or go along to the playgroup. They look forward to seeing you soon.

Otford Allotments

One of the most important items on the Allotment Association agenda is the Annual General Meeting, which was held recently and Chairman Ken Gunderson was able to congratulate all on their plot maintenance and produce in a difficult year of extremes of weather conditions. This did not stop Terry and Joan Smith in taking the Cup for the best allotment for the second year running, with Ken Fassenfelt a close second. Robin Cutler was awarded the Shield for the best small plot (5 rods and under) with Barbara and Eric Huggins close behind. Another, this time special award of life membership of the Association was given to Ted Hewitt (President for many years and now living in Scotland) for his services to the allotments and the Association in particular. Gordon Darby, retiring treasurer was elected the new President. The Association has an important 50th year ahead, which they hope to celebrate by replacing

the existing, but rather elderly equipment shed. There had been many changes over the past year, losing some very good gardeners to other activities or parts of the world, but finding some equally enthusiastic gardeners to fill the empty plots – some 20 in all. So once again it is a fully tenanted site with 59 members of the Association (many of them women and young couples) but the situation is always changing, so if you want to book yourself an area to garden and grow your own crops, fruit and flowers in this beautiful part of Otford, call in at the Parish Council Office or give Barbara Hine a ring on 01959 525468 to see what may be available.

Picture of the Month

This is a new venture, which can be viewed in the Heritage Centre.

This month's painting is by Sheila Dickerson who has been painting for a number of years, but has only in fairly recent times taken to Botanical painting. Such has been her success that she was invited to exhibit at this year's Botanical Painting Exhibition at Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve, where many professional botanical artists display their work. She has recently become a Friend of the Botanical Art Society

Crime Scam – Beware

This scam has been reported via Eric Baldock of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

'Women who shop alone should be wary of a scam now in operation. If they return to their car and find a flat tyre, a well-dressed man carrying a briefcase may offer to help change the wheel. On completion he asks for a lift back to his own car parked some way away. If the briefcase is opened it is found to contain rope, duck tape and knives. **DO NOT** under any circumstances allow anyone unknown to you into your car. This person has on occasion dressed as a woman claiming to be ill and asking to be taken to a doctor. Again make your excuses and go for help'.

Some general Crime Prevention advice.

- o **DO** make sure your house is secure when you go out. Close all windows however small. If you go out for the evening leave some lights on.
- o **DO NOT** open your door to strangers.
- o **DO NOT** leave valuables or any items on show in your car.

With the recent armed hold up at the Post Office and burglaries at the other shops in the Parade please **DO** support all village shops or we might lose them.

Bridge Video

A video made by Barbara Darby of the replacement of the bridge in the High Street and resurfacing this Summer is now available from the Parish Office / Heritage Centre at a cost of £6.50 or ring 01959 523339.

Otford Methodist Wednesday Afternoons Women's Fellowship

Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings which take place at 2.30pm in the Methodist Church Hall and a list of next months speakers and events are as follows: -

November

26th – Brian Raynor & Co – *Christmas Handbells*

December

3rd – Peter Hills – *Christmas Meditation*

10th – Lunch at Ellenors



Trains

The new timetable with increases in the number of trains calling at Shoreham and Eynsford and a ½ hour service to Bat & Ball and Sevenoaks on Sundays has been well received. There are still plenty of timetables available at the Station and Parish Council office **BUT** if you are travelling at weekends do check as to whether there are engineering works affecting your journey. On the last two weekends buses have run between Otford and Sevenoaks but additional Charing Cross to Ashford and Dover trains have been diverted via Otford. The dates of the proposed engineering works can be found in the front of the timetable. The coffee bar at the station is open on weekdays from about 6am to midday and we have requested additional litterbins in the waiting room and on the platforms. We have also complained that the lights on the footpath to Well Road are still not working. Details of the Christmas and New Year services will be listed in the December newsletter.

South Eastern Trains took over the running of the South Eastern network from Connex on Sunday 9th November 2003. Your tickets, including season tickets, will still be valid on the same services and you can renew them in the same way. It is business as usual for train services. The staff who run the railway day-to-day and the services operated will not change. They have a number of objectives as listed below:

- Robust timetables that strengthen their ability to make trains run on time.
- Cleaner, more welcoming trains and stations.
- Continuing introduction of brand new trains to replace old 'slam door' carriages.
- Improved arrangements to manage service disruption when things go wrong
- Improved flows of information to stations about train running and service alterations.
- Enough well trained and friendly staff to enable their planned service levels to be achieved.

Remembrance Sunday

The Parish Council arranged for advance warning notices to be displayed on the three approach roads to the Green but the absence of any police made it impossible to stop the traffic for any length of time. The only solution will be to apply for a formal road closure notice early in 2004 and this will be considered by the Parish Council

Police Surgery

The next Police Surgery will take place on Wednesday 7th January 2004 and PC Jackie Allen will be joined by Lorraine Chapman from West Kent Housing. So if you have any concerns please come and see them between 10am and 12 noon.

CAB Surgery

An adviser from CAB is at the Otford Parish Council office on the 1st Tuesday of each month between 10am and 12noon. Please use this local service. The next surgery will be on 2nd December

'Staywarm'

This is one of a number of schemes advertised by energy suppliers which offers fixed prices for gas and electricity for the over 60's. If you are interested details of the scheme are available at the Parish Council office.

Post Watch

Postwatch South East England helps with your postal problems – closure of post offices – reliability of mail delivery – lost mail. If you have problems first complain to your postal operator: Royal Mail 08457 740 740

www.royalmail.com

Parcelforce 0800 22 44 66

www.parcelforce.co.uk

Post Offices 0800 22 33 44

www.postoffice.co.uk

If you are unhappy with the response you get, contact Postwatch on 08456 013265 or email southeast@postwatch.co.uk

Our postcode area TN Tonbridge has 94.4% of first class mail delivered next day and is currently in the national top 20 performing postcode areas.

South East Water

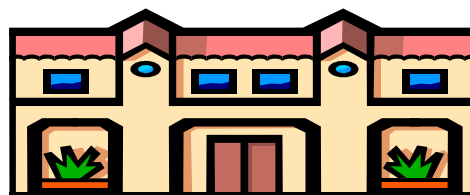
South East Water is asking its customers to still be water wise due to the eight months of below average rainfall that the region has been experiencing. The rain that has fallen over the last few days has not been substantial enough to make a significant impact on the low levels at Ardingly and Arlington Reservoirs. Without substantial rainfall this winter, there could be the possibility of water shortages next spring. South

East Water is still proactively maximising groundwater to reduce the pressure on its reservoirs, but urges customers to follow simple tips such as only filling your kettle with the amount you need, taking a shower instead of a bath, not leaving the tap running when cleaning teeth or washing your hands, waiting until you have a full load before running washing machines or dishwashers and using a bucket and sponge to wash the car and not a hosepipe. Also repair dripping taps and lag pipes to prevent bursts in cold weather. Please use water wisely.

Christmas Shopping

Don't forget first to look in our village shops for that special Christmas present. We have some lovely individual shops, which are all starting to look very festive, and they all need your support at this busy time.

Planning



The following applications were considered by the Parish Council at its meeting in November. For more information, please contact the Parish Clerk or the Strategic Services Director, Sevenoaks District Council, Argyle Road, *Sevenoaks, Kent* on 01732 227000

a. New applications

SE/03/02542 32 Hillydeal Road Sub-division of plot and erection of new dwelling with integral garage

b. Results Received

SE/03/01158 2 Wickham Field Loft conversion with roof lights and front porch. Amended plans received with letter dated 07.07.03 *Refused*

SE/03/01703 Block 1 Vestry Ind Vestry Road Erection of a warehouse with offices, parking and turning area (revised) *Allowed*

SE/03/02126 52a Pilgrims Way East Creation of basement beneath recently approved replacement dwelling (ref no SE/02/02794) *Allowed*

SE/03/02215 2 New Barn Farm Cott's, Telston Lane

Change of use from agricultural to residential land to allow newly purchased adjacent land to be contained within residential curtilage *Refused*

SE/03/02220 Land adj 7 Greenhill Road Proposed single dwelling house and garden *Allowed*

c. Planning Appeals

SE/03/00062 Block 1 Vestry Est Vestry Road Erection of a warehouse with offices, parking and turning area Appeal against refusal – withdrawn