



THE OTFORD SOCIETY

ESTABLISHED 1976

THE OTFORD VILLAGE VOICE PLANNING FOR THE SUMMER

What a lot has happened in the Otford Society since our last issue.

We have elected two new members to the Management Committee, Jenny Kelly, who has recently also just become a parish councillor as well and Patty Chatterjee, best known for her organisation, year-after-year, of our fantastic Otford Fete. Two really highly-qualified and pro-active people. We are all the better for their involvement.

Our most recent event was in supporting the launch of the first of the Otford Adventures. This was a project suggested and led by member, Caitriona Dickinson, supported by the Ot Soc team of Patty, Carol, Jenny and Janet. This first adventure is aimed at young families who can enjoy an adventure walk within Oxenhill Shaw and Meadow, located at the bottom of Tudor Drive. At its launch, two story-walks with local children's author, Janet Davies were fully booked in no time. If you are going on the trail, you might like to download her story: *The little rabbit who was afraid of everything*, from our website below. It could turn your walk into a special event.

Later, there will be other adventures devised for other parts of the village. By following the special adventure map, children can discover the clues and surprises awaiting them. Everything from playing great jungle drums to seeing who is staying in the bugs hotel this week. It has been a remarkable success with children (and parents) and the social media has been abuzz with the news. The Adventure map is also available to download on the website or you can purchase your copy from any of the shops displaying it in their window. For both the story and the map, go to <https://otfordsociety.org.uk/projects/otfordadventures>

The Photo competition has been getting a lot of responses this month too and there will be a jury selection at the end of July. Again, look for the details on our website <https://otfordsociety.org.uk> Sorting the submissions is proving no easy task. – and, of course, there's a prize! Thanks to Patty for all her hard work.

And a mention here about that website. It is so stimulating. It provides a real font of information and news – and all due to its lead, Marianne Bradnock. From nothing, she has created a really fun and involving site which increasingly gains more and more hits. Take a look for yourself and enjoy.

One of its innovative features is in 'Under Our Umbrella'. This contains contact information and news on every one of the village shops and businesses. Not only that, it also gives you contact details for every club and association in Otford. Every one. They can include their own up-to-the-minute news and information on their meetings. It provides a really useful service, aimed at bringing our community closer together. It's amazing what's on offer in Otford.

Please email editor@otfordsociety.org.uk if your club or business isn't listed and you'd like it to be, or if there are changes to be made.

And there's so much to look forward to this summer. Another Otford adventure, with Scarecrows this time, at the Allotments; the picnic at the Palace; the Otford Labyrinth; the summer annual Garden Party; and, as the evenings draw in, we are planning a race-night for everyone to take part in.

Meanwhile your committee are looking at a whole range of projects for the months ahead.

PICNIC AT THE PALACE

Join us for a Sunday afternoon picnic in the field behind Otford Palace on Sunday 1st August, next month. We're starting at 2.30pm. You just bring your rug and your chairs, some sandwiches and a thermos, and fingers crossed, we will have a beautiful sunny afternoon.

Every resident of the village (because in our first year everyone is an Otford Society member of course) is welcome for this afternoon event. Nothing complicated. No organised games. No piped music. Simply a lovely way to enjoy the afternoon with your family and friends. In fact invite some others along to join you.

If the little ones want to dress up as a Palace Princess or a Palace Knight, then I'm sure there will be prizes.

If you approach the palace from the Green. Then walk to the left, beside the gatehouse building, and you step straight into the field (once the biggest courtyard in Europe). We'll have notices up and you'll see our banner.

With our model on display, you can even see how this place looked in 1516 when it was first built; try and name the toy tiger or see how good your family are at solving the giant Otford Labyrinth – or simply sit yourself down with an ice cream (if we can organise one). It will be just a lovely afternoon out for everyone and some happy memories too, we hope.

THE OTFORD LABYRINTH

This is the idea from committee member, Phil Clucas. The plan is to design a giant labyrinth in the Courtyard Field of the Palace. Otford families and our many visitors can then enjoy walking the convoluted pathway of the three-centuries-old spiral design. Phil, initially, is cutting the labyrinth in the grass of the field. If the design works, as well it should, then with the support of the Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust, we hope Historic England will permit us to make it more permanent. Whether this is by outlining its trails with a low box hedge, or simply establishing the pathway with flag-stones or gravel is yet to be decided. Either way, the Otford Society hope to create a permanent feature that fascinated previous Tudor owners of the Palace as much as it will modern-day 'pilgrims'.

CYCLING WITH THE FAMILY

We are all well aware of the health benefits of cycling as well as the sheer fun of cycling together as a family. For that reason, the Otford Society is actively supporting the Sevenoaks-to-Otford Cycle Scheme (STOCS) which aims to provide a safe cycling route between the village and Sevenoaks. It's hoped that this could be used by families, shoppers, commuters, tourists and even older children on their journey to school. What a joy to be able to safely cycle right into the town!

Sevenoaks District Council is supporting a bid for funding via Kent County Council to the Department for Transport's *Active Travel Fund*. Whilst there are still many barriers to be overcome, if the funding bid is successful, this plan has a good chance to succeed. This is being actively led by our committee member, Simon Featherstone, who has also recently become vice-chairman of our Parish Council.

Simon is also working on our behalf with the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership to explore the practicalities of at last developing the Darent Valley Path as a safe, joint cycle and pedestrian route all the way from Westerham to Dartford. What a trip that could be! We wish him well..

THE ANNUAL SOCIETY GARDEN PARTY

The Otford Society garden party is an institution that has taken place over very many years since the Society's formation. Your new committee have no intention of breaking with this tradition. It is, after all, one of our major sources of funding for the year ahead. (And remember this year, we have asked nothing of our members so that we could demonstrate that we were worthy of your trust).

Sir Michael and Lady Bett of Colet's Well have kindly invited us to have our party in their garden on 19th September. Numbers will, inevitably, be limited but we will publish more information closer to the time.

THE VILLAGE FETE

We will certainly be there with our tent and our banners. The 30th August is the date. There will be photos on display from the photo competitions and examples of some of the many projects we have undertaken for you during our first year in office. We will also be selling our summer raffle tickets. Most important of all, we will be inviting you to sign-on as a paid up member for the year ahead. We still have much to do and we will need your support to achieve it. And, of course we are always looking for your ideas to help us improve our lives in Otford.

This year, the 1940s Society have generously invited us to share with them in running the 'Wheel of fortune' This always-popular game takes a lot of effort (and shouting) so Roll-up, Roll-up and win yourself a bottle on us!

SCARECROWS AHOY!

Otford Adventures is having another event for the little ones at 10 o'clock this Saturday morning, the 17th July. Put it in your diary and see how inventive the allotment gardeners have been this year in frightening off the crows!

On Saturday, the Allotments Association are having an 'open day' for the whole community and children between 3-7 are particularly invited. Scarecrows everywhere! What's not to wonder at?

The parents will need to vote for their children's choice of the most favourite scarecrow and (if Covid restrictions allow) try out something tasty from the tasting table. A fun morning.

It's free and there is no need to book. Thanks to Caitriona and Jenny in leading on this. And thanks for all those hardworking gardeners at the Allotments.

THE RAILWAY BRIDGE. TELL US YOUR VIEWS

By way of information, the Inquiry on the proposal by Network Rail to close the footpath/level crossing from Tudor Drive and replace it with a 62 step footbridge starts on Monday 26th July. Despite requests by the Parish Council and the Otford Society for the Inquiry to be held in public (when covid restrictions allowed), the Planning Inspectorate are demanding that it be held via a digital link only!

Given our concerns over this proposed closure, we have been asked to address the enquiry representing the views of our membership. We have therefore emailed all those members who have supplied us with their email addresses in order to assess a common view before we do so. We want to ensure that what we say has the backing of the majority of our members,

Our concern is that, should the enquiry approve the closure of the level crossing, there is a possibility that Network Rail may not then replace it with a footbridge as they have previously suggested. This has apparently been the case elsewhere. If this were so, the serious inconvenience it will cause to all those of our community who live to the east of the railway, will be significant. So if you receive an email from us asking your views, or wish to express them whether or not you have email contact with us, please do respond as soon as possible.

IDEAS WELCOME

We have a great Management committee and frankly, we are a pretty inventive lot. But we are always looking for new volunteers and exciting ideas for future projects. We can't do everything but already we have set our sights on one or two larger community projects which we may take forward in the year ahead. Meanwhile there are always ideas which can help improve our lives. If you have one, tell us. As we have said often enough, our role is to try to make life that bit better for everyone in Otford. But we need to know your ideas too. Your village society is dedicated to benefit you, so talk to us. We're listening.

Rod

Your chairman,

www.otfordsociety.org.uk and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.