

# THE OTFORD VILLAGE VOICE

NEWS-SHEET OF THE OTFORD SOCIETY



CHRISTMAS EDITION 2021



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- RAIL CROSSING DECISION • HOPES AND PLANS

## STRONGER TOGETHER

## LIGHTING UP OTFORD FOR CHRISTMAS

“Christmas is ‘a comin’ in “ and this year we’ll be lighting up Otford. That’s right. Lights throughout the village! With huge support from the Parish Council we will be putting up warm Christmas lights throughout the village, the Parade and up at Yvonne’s shop. Though you wouldn’t think it, when you see the lines of warm-coloured bulbs, they are in fact LEDs so won’t be using up much money or power on electricity. We are staying as Green as we can. So the warm tones of Yuletide will be there for all of us this year.

Christmas and our re-vitalised Otford Society has now completed its first full year. We hope you feel we have done our bit for the community over the last twelve months – Christmas trees in all the shops last year; the successful Otford Adventures enjoyed by young families; the launch of the Ot. Soc. website which includes news on all our village societies ([otfordsociety.org.uk](http://otfordsociety.org.uk)); the Chick-chase for the children over Easter; the noisy Wheel of Fortune we shared with the 40s Society at the fete; the lovely Picnic at the Palace enjoyed by all Otford’s little princesses and their knights, and of course our end-of-summer Garden Party at Colet’s Well. Not too bad for a year’s events and next year we are already planning a whole raft of new things to enjoy – some of which you can read about later.



*The Otford Society at the 2021 Village Fete with archaeologists and the 1940s Society.*





celebration on the 5th June. These are happening across the country. Ours will be big. We promise. And it will be memorable – an occasion to look back on. We hope it will be ‘The Event of the Year’ which can bring our entire village together in celebration. We are at the planning stage so more about the details of this exciting event later.

But right now, as we pull out all the tinsel and begin writing out our Christmas lists, all of us on the Otford Society committee would like to wish everyone in Otford, “a Very Happy Christmas and a much looked-forward-to New Year.”

Rod Shelton: Chairman

## **AND THEY'RE OFF!**

Here's something else to look forward to... At the start of Spring, call a few friends and come to the Memorial Hall on the 1st April. Otford is having its own Derby Day. Yes, we're holding a race night. Tickets are just £5 for an exciting evening of horse racing, chatter, cheering and the chance of more than a few wins to go home with. There will be a cash bar, loads of snacks and a good supply of wine, beer and soft drinks on offer to help you get through the excitement of the evening.

Not betted before? The way it works is that real horse races are shown on a giant screen. You can place a bet on any horse you choose and, just like the Tote in the real races, you can win a generous percentage of the money that's been put down on that race if your horse wins. It's very simple. And you never know your luck... so don't forget next April Fool's Day!

Entry to the event will be £5.00 per person payable on the night. Doors will open at 6.45pm and the first race, one of eight, will take place at 7.15pm. Come to the hall with a few friends and enjoy a fun-filled evening.

## **BEWARE! ELVES ON THE SHELVES**

Well they seem to be popping up everywhere this Christmas – especially if you visit any of our local Otford shops. Green and red giggles going on behind the hats or amongst the jewellery, and they even seem to be hiding amongst the flowers at Denise's flower shop. It's another seasonal I-spy game for the little ones, so see how many elves they can find (and work-out their silly cracker





jokes) when you take them shopping... and of course there will be prizes! So visit all your local shops and take a look at what's on offer – and you may find an elf or two. Another reason for you to take the kids down to your local shops this holiday.



## HOW'S YOUR PHOTO FINGER?

This winter there is a fresh slant to our seasonal photo competition. It has a 'Green Theme' – so that may be its

colour theme or something good for our environment. Keep your eyes open and your camera-finger ready when you are visiting the village or surrounding countryside. We are looking for some original local winter shots (even our strings of LED lights perhaps?) So put your entry in and win this season's prize. You can see details of our press release here: <https://otfordsociety.org.uk/were-dreaming-of-a-green-christmas-winter-photo-competition>.

## WE DID OUR BEST

Before we took up the case, we conducted a poll of our members and it was clear that a substantial majority of you wanted to retain the existing pedestrian rail crossing to Tudor Drive. So we stood our ground. Those involved then spent days on-line arguing the village case at the public inquiry. The planning inspector has now made his findings public and I fear, despite our arguments, we were not successful.

We are now destined to lose our level crossing and have it replaced by a high footbridge. The crossing may have been there for a century-and-a-half and there may never have been an accident on it but, as in so many things, it stood in the way of progress. At some unspecified date in the near future the crossing will be fenced off so people can no longer use it. Then Network Rail will build their bridge – at some time of their choosing. We would though, like to thank all those unsung members of the team that fought for the village cause: Phil Clucas, Martin Williamson, Barry Davis, Allen Lanceley, Tom Housden, and Ken Cardinal. – as well of course, as Irene Roy and Simon Featherstone who acted as our ‘QCs’ throughout the seven long days of the Public Inquiry. We did our best.

## **DEVELOPERS QUEING-UP ON OUR DOORSTEP**

The reason why The Otford Society first came into being was to fight the introduction of M26 motorway spur-roads – where Sainsbury’s now stands and by Beadles Garage. It was, as we know, successful. Keeping us safe from an invasion of unwanted planning is still a key part of your Society’s remit and is contained in our Articles. (It is one of the reasons why I sit on the Parish Council planning committee).





*Help keep us safe from unwanted planning by supporting the Otford Society.*

As you probably know, Sevenoaks District Council had their draft proposals for a Local District Plan rejected by the inspector. This has meant that they have had to start again. Part of the process is to examine all sites of potential development even when, under 'exceptional circumstances', they might lie within the Green Belt! They have now made a 'Call for Sites' so, of course, developers from far and wide are now circling, hungrily, like vultures. We are not exempt from their attentions either. Developers are in the business for making a profit, not to provide social housing, first-timer homes or affordable houses. They will simply seek to gain the biggest return from the least expenditure.

So please be careful should you be approached discreetly to sell off any of your land. You may be introducing an unwanted cuckoo into our midst who could bring harm to the rest of us. Already two or three potentially large developments are manoeuvring around the outskirts of our village trying to gain access into our Otford nest. Please be warned. On your behalf, we will do our very best to keep aware and resist them.

## TOO MUCH LIGHT!

Following the conclusion of COP26 in Glasgow and the desire to create a greener future, could we in Otford not now act together by reviewing our usage of un-necessary outside lighting?

We all appreciate light for security reasons but is it really necessary to mount so many lights outside our homes, in drives, garages and gardens which remain on for such long periods? Are they really necessary? We all of us are aware that in some roads house lighting systems appear to be designed to show-off the property like some theme park. Please, not in Otford.

We are a rural village, surrounded by open countryside. Reducing the use of outside lighting would be a small but important step to retaining the village atmosphere we have lost through overuse of outside lighting. Please help.

## WHAT ELSE?

We're looking at a lot of things both big and small. The small ones we can, with your help, do ourselves. Some of the bigger projects will need us to join forces with the Parish Council – but that's fine as we try and work together in tandem anyway. But, come the time we may need local volunteers to help.

Making Telston Park a friendlier place for locals to visit and where young families can meet; making improvements to the Hale Lane recreation ground are both objectives we share with the OPC. Getting more trees planted along our road verges – what a joy to see blossom in the Spring! –and there's more. We'll keep ideas coming and welcome ideas from you. It doesn't mean we can achieve them all but we can have a good try. 'Reach for the stars', as they say.

**PLEASE HELP BY DONATING...** a contribution of £10 from every household in Otford will enable the Otford Society to continue its work in the community for the whole of 2022. If you can afford that bit more then we will be able to raise our sites that bit higher.

To make a donation (however large or small) go to:

[www.otfordsociety.org.uk/membership](http://www.otfordsociety.org.uk/membership)