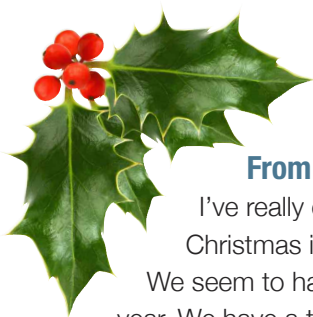


# THE OTFORD VILLAGE VOICE

NEWSLETTER OF THE OTFORD SOCIETY





## From the Chairman

I've really enjoyed preparing this Christmas issue of Village Voice.

We seem to have done so much this year. We have a talented and very hard-working management team and they all surpassed themselves in their efforts to make so many of our events such a success. A very big thank you.

One of our main objectives is to make community events happen in which everyone can partake. They take a lot of organising and a big vote of thanks should go to all our volunteers who give so willingly of their time. They are our bedrock. And special thanks to those individuals who 'go the extra mile' for our community, this year's two Otford Super Star winners, Sue Stephenson and Robert Hunt.

Next year, it looks like we have some more 'big ones' to take on and we are already doing preparatory work. As you will read, our role often extends into other areas of community life which are perhaps less exciting but just as valuable.

We try and support not only the village but those that live in it. If we can help, then we will. Working in unison with our Parish Council, I hope our efforts complement the work they do to ensure our village runs smoothly.

As we enter a period of greater financial restriction money becomes less and

less available to societies such as ours. We recognise this but ask that, if you can afford it, even a small donation to your Society is more than welcome.

Our trustees, our management committee and myself wish you all a really warm and Happy Christmas.

*Rod Shelton*



## The April Easter trail

It was just a fun thing to do for all our Otford children at Easter – find a rabbit hanging in a tree or in a



shop window (*above*) and see how many you can count – and they really were everywhere, in the most unexpected of places. One little girl swore she had found thirty just on the walk to One Stop!

Take your list into one of the shops displaying our poster and walk out with your prize of chocolate bunnies. The question now, of course, is what do we do next year?

### **The May Village Fete**

There we were again, shouting down the megaphone to come and take part in the Wheel of Fortune (*right*).

So many bottles of wine and boxes of chocolates went home with happy punters that day.... as for us, we all suffered with strained throats for the next 24 hours!







## The June Jubilee Barbecue

Well, it was the one everyone was talking about and, no question, it was an unqualified success.

If the objective of the Otford Society is to bring our community together, we certainly surpassed ourselves. We estimate there were in excess of 700 people picnicking on the grass of the Green that June day (*opposite page top, and above*). There were an awful lot of hog-roasts and ice creams.

Miss Vintage and the 'Move over Dali' jazz group were an unqualified success and persuaded to continue long after their bookings.

The management team of the Society really pulled out all the stops and deserve our congratulations.

## The August Garden Party

The Garden Party in the lovely garden of the Old Parsonage (*opposite page, below*) was, what it set out to be, a beautiful, friendly evening. Tom and Anita Watson were our generous hosts and we cannot thank them enough.

All the hand-made canapés and delicious mouth-watering titbits were created by our own Namie Sutton assisted by Yara who is visiting us from Ukraine. Meanwhile Rebecca Rogers and her duet partner, Paul Cooper, accompanied the party on their violins.

It was a memorable and magical evening.

## The November Otford Christmas Fayre

Less than a month has passed and our first Christmas Fayre is already a memory. Yet, again, it was another rounding success for the Otford Society team.



Jenny Kelly (*left*) gathered her co-crafters and designers from all over the district to provide a wonderful array of hand-made crafts for sale. And the visitors flocked into Otford to buy.

One of our shops said they did their best day's trading in three years! Well-known, Leo-the-Baker arrived with a packed van to sell his home-made bread and had sold out by 12 o'clock! Indeed, so

popular was he that he will now visit the village every Wednesday morning selling fresh bread and those amazing cinnamon buns from his van in The Bull's car park!

Yes, it meant closing the road for the day but with the fantastic army of volunteers helping to control traffic, and give advice, we received not one complaint. Top marks to all those who so generously helped. When something is working, you cannot help but wish it success.



Magician Robert Pound, entertainer Silly Billy, singers Miss Vintage and David Gardiner all contributed to giving the event a live, spontaneous excitement which was crowd-catching.

But that wasn't the end of it. The Archbishop's Tower has been deserted for the last 400 years.... step forward the design talent of Tasha Logsdon and her team as she entirely transformed it into a wonderland Father Christmas grotto. We are blessed to have such talent in our village. No doubt Henry VIII

is still having a chuckle.

Families booked to visit Santa throughout the day and, for a short while, to enter his magical world. Such a success was it, the tower had to re-open two weeks later!

'Thank you' isn't enough to congratulate our entire team led by Patty Chatterjee who co-ordinated a complex and multi-faceted operation with such great skill.

*After four centuries the ruined palace echoes again with the laughter of joyful children.*



### **December Otford wonderland**

At 3.30 every afternoon, Otford lights up like a fairyland. Isn't it a lovely sight? Even the Parade is twinkling. A big thanks to our Parish Council for their generous contribution for all the lights.

We won't pretend that stringing up all the support wires and then hanging every bulb was a walkover but for our team it was well worth the effort. The lights will continue illuminating Otford until Twelfth Night, 6th January.





This year of course, we have gone one better with the arrival of our 20 ft-high Christmas Tree on the Green (*above*). With much puffing and blowing it now stands proud, firmly supported and twinkling with 800 tiny lights.

Happy Christmas everyone! – and thanks again, team.

### **Spreading the warmth**

Maybe we started a bit early but who was to know the weather would be so mild in the run-up to Christmas?

Either way, all three churches, along with our library and the Hilal Restaurant are enthusiastic in their support for our 'Spread the Warmth' initiative.

To anyone that wants it, there is now always somewhere warm to go in the village, every day of the week. Somewhere where there will always be companionship, a free cuppa and a biscuit waiting for you.

Don't get cold at home, give it a try. And we're not alone in this – listen to The Archers on the radio. Only last week the pub and tea-room in Ambridge offered the same thing to all their villagers, too.

A good idea will always spread. So a big thank you to all those who are giving up their time to make this a success.

### Take a look at the times they are open and pop in:

On Monday mornings	Otford Library	from 11.30 to 13.00.
On Tuesday mornings	The Evangelical Church	from 9.30 to 13.00
On Wednesday mornings	The Hilal Restaurant	from 9.30 to 12.30
On Thursday mornings	Otford Library	from 9.30 to 12.30
On Friday mornings	The Methodist Church	from 9.30 to 13.00
On Friday afternoons	St. Bart's church room	from 1400 to 17.00

### Watching the world creeping closer

Part of our remit at the Otford Society is to do all we can to help protect our community and that includes encroachment by new housing schemes and unwanted development.

As many of you know, Fort Halstead, now the MOD have left, is likely to become a new development area for 700 new homes. This may not affect us directly you may think, until you realise that all those new families are being referred to the Otford Medical Practice as their preferred GP. It is not our place to comment upon the medical practicalities of this decision but the additional traffic that it will generate, both through Otford and on to Kemsing is certainly of concern.

Now plans for the Quarry development, to the east of the Vestry Estate are under discussion. This proposes an added 800 new units being built on the old Greatness Farm site next to the Tarmac landfill (on land to the south of the railway as the line bends round towards Maidstone).

Apart from the effect its traffic will have upon Kemsing and Seal, our concerns are for the effect upon the Bat and Ball intersection. A new roundabout simply will not suffice to overcome the congestion. All we can assure members is that, with your Parish Council and District Council members, we are monitoring and commenting on these proposals and will do our utmost to protect Otford from added traffic congestion.

### Offering a helping hand

It is not part of our objectives to act as any form of Social Welfare for our community. However that doesn't stop us offering a helping hand when it is needed.

With incomes ever tighter and the price of fuel and goods rising alarmingly, there are families in our community who are finding life a big struggle. It is our

hope and intention to work in future with established charities in doing what we can to alleviate that strain that some of our local families are feeling. We certainly don't want any children and their families missing out on Christmas this year.

### **The King's Coronation**

Our new King has his coronation on Saturday 6th May. And Otford will have its great Coronation Celebration two days later, on Monday 8th May. It's been declared a public holiday (as well as the 1st May).

We'll probably be out on the Green again along with the beer tent, ice creams and hog-roast, all in full Coronation regalia. We hope all the popular singers and bands from last year's picnic will be there again and the weather will, of course, be perfect!

So put it in your diary. The 8th May. Get the family together, and the picnic rugs and chairs and join us for our Great Otford Coronation celebration.

We won't disappoint you. Do we ever?

### **The Otford Fete**

Our Otford fete next year is taking place on 1st May. This year, Patty Chatterjee, who has organised this massive event so successfully for many years, has asked whether it can come under the Otford Society umbrella. It won't make any change to what is on offer and Patty will continue to head it up. It just means that with the fete's increasing popularity, we hope we can provide her with added support and manpower to make it all a smoother ride.

Given the success of last year's contributors, there will be a leaning toward local craft stalls and entertainment and away from the more commercial units. In a word, we'd like to help her 'bring it home to Otford'....wish us luck!

### **Wot a bloomin' station, Otford is!**

It will be a marvellous Spring-change-over at our station this coming year.

The Friends of Otford Station are now a nineteen-strong team of volunteers breathing new life into our station.

Their aim is to *"bring the station into the village and the village into the station"*.

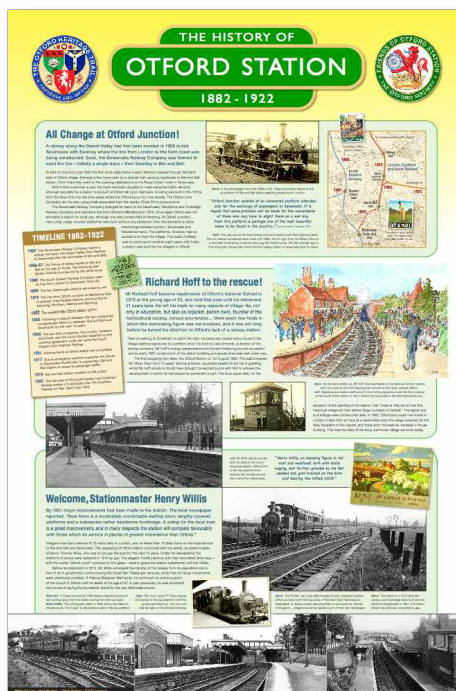


The horticultural team, led by James Holdak, have really put their back into creating this transformation. The new wooden window boxes outside and the big planter just inside the up-platform have already made the station a friendlier place. Now the hundreds of mixed bulbs planted this autumn are ready to transform the bare expanse of the down platform into a palette of colour.

Meanwhile, as part of this transformation, craft-designer Jenny Kelly has led on the pop-up craft project which takes place in the ticket hall. On the second Thursday of every month she has organised for local crafters, artists and photographers to show their work at the station. These regular little shows of local talent reward any visit with a great sense of pride and admiration for local creativity. Be sure to make a visit.

Meanwhile new posters (*right*), designed by our own artist, Phil Clucas, tell the story of Otford's rise to becoming today's mainline station.

Thanks to Chris and Simon whose efforts have been so productive.



## Who pays for all this?

Well, of course, we do. And what we don't pay for, we more than make-up for with unpaid work. Believe me, all the members of your committee work very hard indeed to make all these events such a success. And the Parish Council are often very generous in supporting us on some of the major community projects.

As your committee we have a remit to care for you, our village. This means we also need to have a financial reserve to be able to fund a legal battle or similar cause if ever our community comes under threat. But sources of funds are not always there and relying upon occasional donations and bucket-collections, rarely pays all the bills.

So every penny you gift to us along with the gift aid we receive, goes toward the support of the Otford Community.

We'll go on doing what we do to help Otford. But this year, if you could make a standing order to the Otford Society, it would be a great relief.

Just £10 or more, would go a big way to help us, help you.

Believe me, every penny will count. Please!

Our Bank code: 30-98-97: Our Account No. 83442563



*Above: Sue Stephenson 'Super star'.*

*Below: Otford Super Star winner Robert Hunt.*



## **We can't do it without you**

Thank you to all our volunteers. We say it again, **A BIG THANKS TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS!**

Without our willing teams of volunteers who help us at every event, things simply would not happen. The Otford Society volunteers underpin all our work.

We need them.

It's clear they enjoy themselves too and we'd just like them to know how very much we appreciate them. So if you feel you'd like to join our 'appy army' on one of the coming events, just get in touch by sending an email to:

[volunteers@otfordsociety.co.uk](mailto:volunteers@otfordsociety.co.uk). Come and join us.