



Report of the Chairman of the Otford Society, May 2023

It has been a very happy and successful twelve months. As your Society we have carried out something in the order of ten separate community events in that time – all with the aim of bringing our community together. You only had to look round the faces of families at the Coronation Barbecue or at the Christmas Fair, to know that these events work for everyone and we can all be proud to be part of our Otford community. We live in a great village.

As we take on more challenges, we also take on more responsibility so let me take a moment to explain how the Society operates. With responsibility for running the Society are five elected **Trustees**. Their role is to ensure we remain financially sound, that we maintain strict safety rules and generally operate in a professional manner. Each year, they are elected by you, our members, which you will be doing again shortly.

In addition to the Trustees, the **Management Committee** currently includes five additional members. These are not elected by the membership but are approved by the Trustees. After discussing ideas for a new project, a 'Lead' is elected by the Committee to head up each event. Their role is to prepare costing estimates and schedules and to build their team. They are the ones who will turn an idea on paper into reality. They will also need to draw on our crucial base of volunteers who will be the ground troops on the day. We are getting good at what we do but learning all the time.

Three things: Firstly, our **Constitution**. This states clearly the objectives of the Society and how it will achieve those aims. We, your Trustees, felt that the previous Constitution was not as clear in its aims as we might wish and we have prepared a new draft Constitution on which we will be asking you to vote at our next meeting in six months' time. It will be published online in advance to that you have time to review it; if you have any concerns please let us know.

Secondly, we cannot operate without funds and whilst most of you have been very fair and generous in your contributions, we accept it is a rather haphazard system for running a professional society. So we will also be asking you at our next meeting to vote on whether we should adopt a more formal **Membership** system, and what the annual membership fee should be. This would come into effect on 1st January 2024, the start of our financial year. According to Charity Commission rules, all paid up members will be entitled to vote on the way the Society operates, including the election of Officers and Trustees.

Finally, the annual **Otford Village Fete**: Patty Chatterjee continues to be an inspirational lead for this event and with her committee has run it for a number of years. She will, we hope, continue to do so. At her request, however, the Otford Society has now taken on responsibility for the Fete. It has raised significant funds in the past and these have been distributed to those worthy local causes which have made formal application. This will not change; the Trustees recommend that all profits made from the Fete be kept in a separate account in order that we can continue to support Otford residents and organisations in this way.

I extend my sincere thanks to my fellow Trustees and to all the Management Committee for their support and hard work throughout the past year. And I wish to acknowledge the commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers who work so hard to make our events such a success. Together, we are the core of your Otford Society.

I'll leave it to our Treasurer Chris to report on our financial status, and to Vice Chairman Simon to outline what we have in store for you in the year ahead.

With my very best wishes,

Rod Shelton, Chairman