



SPRING NEWSLETTER No. 127

OATEN HILL & DISTRICT SOCIETY

APRIL 2016

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Forthcoming Events For Your Diary:

"The Cathedral, the Local Community and Visitors: The Future"

A talk by Canon Nick Papadopoulos and Martin Crowther, the Cathedral's Community Engagement Officer, will be held at Augustine House, 7.30pm, Wednesday, 25th May 2016. The talk will focus on visits and visitors to the Cathedral, enhancing their enjoyment, increasing accessibility for local people and expanding facilities available to them. There will be an opportunity to ask questions after the talk, and the evening is planned to finish around 9.15pm.

REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2016 are due; if you have not yet paid, please send £5 per household (either cash or cheque) to the OHDS Treasurer, Sophie Scott (address on back page)

We do rely on your support!



No, not a construction disaster, but a planned, welcomed tree

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first of the 2016 Newsletters. This year promises to see exciting changes to the OHDS and its sister association, SCRA. More of that in the Chairman's and Secretary's reports. The Spring edition also introduces a new section: 'Your Letters' in which local residents are invited to write in with views and comments.

Beautifying our local environment, by preserving green spaces and planting and replacing trees wherever possible, has always been an important aim for our Society.

This newsletter hopes you will not only be informed about environmental issues but also be entertained, hence the picture on the front cover of a tree around which a house was deliberately designed and built. That photo comes from the 'Bright Side' website, which states: "The Earth is the magnificent place we call home. It is our duty to treat the natural world with love and respect, and maintain its beauty and health as much as we can. It is possible to begin with something relatively modest — planting a tree, for example, or, at the very least, not cutting down what has already grown" (© 2015 Always See The Bright Side Of Life, Inc). Of course, not all of us might wish to copy the house design in the photo, but the principle of greening our world and living in harmony with nature remains. In our own part of Canterbury, the OHDS has continued to fight for the preservation of green spaces, and to protest against the trend to infill every available space with more buildings. The OHDS has a new group, the *Green Team*, with a specific remit for trees, green spaces, and the planting of flowers and shrubs.

The OHDS understands the risks to human health from the emission of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in exhaust fumes. NO₂ is an irritant gas, detrimental for asthma, heart disease or chronic lung disease. We are concerned that Old Dover Rd, New Dover Rd, and the city roundabouts will become even more vulnerable to emission pollution with the inevitable increase in traffic following the building of thousands of new homes, student accommodation, shops and their supporting services. (See our Acting Chairman's report).

By the way, sign up for the digital version of the Newsletter and enjoy the colourful cover!

Greta Cotterrell, Editor

DONATIONS

Dear member, as you know the Society is always very grateful for one-off or regular donations to supplement our subscription income. For some years we have maintained the flat rate of £5 per year for 2+ member households. The range of our activities has recently expanded significantly and the costs we incur have risen substantially. Despite our best efforts to keep our spending to the bare minimum necessary to keep us going we are now at the point where our annual subscription income barely covers our running costs. We now face the challenges presented by the Draft Local Plan and its associated Transport and Open Space strategies, all of which have major implications for our area.

If you are able to make a donation to support a particular activity please do make that clearly known. Non-specific donations will be put into a general purpose fund. Thank you for your help and support which is greatly appreciated. Please send all donations to Mrs Sophie Scott, OHDS Treasurer.

David Kemsley, Acting Chairman

ARCHIVE FILMS OF CANTERBURY AND LOCAL VILLAGES

These archive film screenings show many areas of Canterbury, including Sturry, Higham Park, Bekesborne, Herne Bay and Bridge. Screening No.11: Saturday 30 April at 2pm, and repeated on Saturday 28 May. Tickets are £5 each, purchased on the door or by phoning (01227) 782994 or online at: www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-and-culture. Venue: Room Pg09 in the Powell Building at the North Holmes Road Campus, Canterbury Christ Church University.

See <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/about-us/find-us/canterbury.aspx> for directions. Limited parking on the North Holmes Road Campus. Pedestrian access is via the Monastery Rd gate.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Halfway through my year as Acting Chairman of the Society I would like firstly to reflect on how busy a time it has been for the committee, as clearly borne out by the breadth of information which my colleagues have compiled for this and previous newsletters. On your behalf I would express our deep appreciation to them for all the various ways in which they strive to make our area a nice place to live. I include the many members of the Society who offer help with flowerbeds, litter picks and newsletter delivery, etc. The evidence of their efforts is there for all to see with the new community gardens, tree plantings, and, at long last, the upgrading of the underpasses. The Society's social events and our Local History Group's contributions round out the wide scope of the OHDS' activities.

Perhaps less visible but of great importance is our work behind the scenes with rigorous scrutiny of planning applications (including tree works), our active involvement in the Higher and Further Education Impact Review, Cllr Oliver Fawcett's very welcome 'Clean up Canterbury' initiative, and of course our website, our e-mail alerts and this Newsletter.

We are very supportive of the pedestrian crossing campaign launched by Ms Isabella Devani and are seeking (together with SCRA) a meeting with KCC Cllrs Michael Northey and Martin Vye. A site visit will look at the crossing adjacent to the police station, as well as the Nunnery Fields Rd junction, and the safety of the Chantry Lane/ODR crossroads.

Looking ahead: although the Draft Local Plan is now closed for consultation the prospect of 4000 houses on the Mountfield Park site looms large with a planning application being lodged with CCC on 4th March. The Council has thirty weeks for determination. The developer will convene a stakeholder event in some two or three months' time to give local residents the opportunity to voice their views about those matters of most interest to them. Along with other RAs and the Canterbury Society I have suggested that the principal topics should be transport, open spaces, community facilities and community engagement, design, affordability, utility service capacity. Updates will be on the website and in the e-mail alerts.

The one other potentially very significant piece of work underway is exploratory discussions with the South Canterbury Residents Association (SCRA) about the possible merger of our two organisations. Chris Tucker writes about this in more detail in his Secretary's report. We will be actively consulting with Society members before any firm conclusions are reached.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will read a very interesting article written by a Society member about the really important part that trees play in improving air quality and moderating temperatures. Like all of us, I have watched with despair (despite the Society's formal objections) as local trees are cut down without adequate replacement, and the largest possible amount of brick or concrete is crammed into the remaining available space.

Indeed, some of the new developments have barely minimal green space. The Kentish Gazette published a personal letter that I wrote on the subject, and I have been in active contact with Cllr Steve Williams who, thankfully, is very keen to promote a discussion within the Canterbury Area Members Panel as to how best to promote further tree and hedge planting and the additional green and open spaces much needed in our area. These very important matters need to be far higher up the pecking list of planning priorities than they appear to be. Recent events in Puckle Lane demonstrate the legitimate strength of public feeling on these issues and the Society will continue to strive to ensure that the powers that be are aware of this.

David Kemsley, Acting Chairman

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Possible OHDS / SCRA merger

Those who are members of both the Oaten Hill and District Society and the South Canterbury Residents Association (there are about 40 in this category) have long been puzzled as to why there are two groups with quite similar objectives operating in the same part of Canterbury. The SCRA geographical area of activity is in fact totally within the OHDS defined area, covering our south-western half, which inevitably results in duplication of effort, for example in the weekly researching of planning applications for this area of overlap. Both groups also have difficulties in finding enough people to join their committees so those that do join find they spend too much time in administration rather than in being free to take part in activities which will improve the quality of life in our community.

Accordingly, following approval by both the OHDS and SCRA committees, a joint working group has been meeting to consider whether a full merger between our organisations would be a rational and beneficial step. The working group has had three constructive meetings so far, and it is planned to present a draft report for both committees to consider in April of 2016. If this report is approved then we will put a proposal to the OHDS membership at an EGM in the summer and SCRA will do the same.

Meanwhile we would like to hear what OHDS members have to say on this topic. We will send a copy of the report to all members whose email addresses we have on file, and I now invite other members who would like a printed copy to write or phone me and the report will be posted or delivered to your address.

Subscriptions online

If you were wondering why you can't pay your annual subscription to OHDS online, work is going on to enable this through a new web page. Soon you will be able to click on a link there, fill in a form and pay, as easy as buying a book! Watch this space....

Chris Tucker, Hon. Sec.

OHDS GREEN TEAM

This new special interest group concerns planting and greening up our area. This means looking after our flower beds and trees, and occasional litter picks to supplement the excellent work done by individuals. Please contact Sophie Scott or Deirdre Hawkes for more

information. A coffee morning is being held at 27 Ersham Road on Thursday 14 April, 10am - 12, for all OHDS members interested in taking an active part. Please advise if you coming.

This year's new project is the construction of a bed on the corner of Cromwell Road and the unadopted road known as Milton Road. Dave Goddard, helped by his son and others, have done sterling work here and we hope you will agree that it really improves the look of this area. A big thank you to the many people who have generously supported this initiative, whether physically, financially or by giving plants and soil. Once the weather warms up we shall be planting up St George's Garden (by the cinema) and the beds by the Fire Station as well as the two beds at each end of Milton Road. We shall continue to keep an eye on the bed in St Augustine's Road and the big shrubbery by Lichfield Avenue.

The bulbs planted in Stanmore Court last year have made a splendid display.

Sophie Scott, Green Team lead

YOUR LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I am sure that we have all noticed the slow depletion of our local trees. Taking a walk each day, I am aware of how with each passing year South Canterbury becomes a little less green. I mourn the loss of so many trees, some of which were felled without permission, or with little regard to our environment.

It is true that trees add a unique character to the streets, softening the hard edges of our manmade structures; but they also serve an urgent purpose that reaches far beyond aesthetic beauty; for without our trees our way of life could be in peril. Trees take in carbon dioxide and other poisons present in a polluted atmosphere; and put out oxygen which is essential to human life. They also absorb the build up of urban heat, and by stabilising the soil they prevent rapid run-off of rain water, so minimising the risk of flooding.

Whilst trees have a role in climate control, they also maintain biodiversity by balancing the ecosystem. Trees provide essential habitats for a broad variety of organisms, ranging from arboreal lichens, algae and fungi, which in turn create food and habitats for other organisms, including birds and other animals. Without this, our immediate neighbourhood would become immensely impoverished. Not surprisingly, when a tree dies all the carbon dioxide that it has absorbed during its life cycle is released back into the atmosphere, and its oxygen contribution will cease.

Whilst our legacy of beauty is slipping away from us, at the same time we are losing our shield against the health effects of increased pollution. All the major roads in the South Canterbury area are becoming more congested, yet the trees, the very things that could protect us are gradually disappearing. We live in a time where high winds and stormy weather are clearly on the increase, yet our property developers appear to give very little thought to the role of green spaces in many of the proposals recently submitted or indeed built. It takes decades for a tree to grow to the size where it can contribute the full range of benefits. Alarmingly then, we are often presented with a situation where for every mature tree felled, it seems acceptable to replace these with extremely juvenile specimens which often do not receive essential care, leading to their inevitable demise without replacement.

I recently sat and watched as an old Ash was felled to the rear of my property, for sadly the tree had been allowed to succumb to disease. As I watched I was struck by the speed and

ease with which it was cut down, in stark contrast to the many, over one hundred, years, that it had taken to grow.

We must perhaps work harder to create a healthier future for ourselves and our children. One that more fully embraces a life, where the threat of environmental damage is kept to a minimum; for this to become a reality we must learn how to nurture and protect our trees.

Alwina

POTHoles & PAVEMENTS

How many times in the last week alone have you had to watch your footing because of uneven pavements or to avoid a pothole while driving? Kent County Council (KCC) is responsible for maintenance of most roads and pavements in our area. They aim to resolve problems within stated times (depending on the degree of hazard). Their problem is that they have over 5,640 miles of road to look after, and they do not have the means to inspect our local roads and pavements often enough to spot all the hazards that will hurt us and damage our vehicles. This is where you come in! As a resident and member of OHDS you are well placed to notice any horrible pavements and holes in roads in our neighbourhood – and you **can** do something about them.

What can I report? This could be: potholes in the road, uneven footpaths, broken/missing manhole covers, blocked drains, damaged signs and broken street furniture. Report bad pavements and roads to Kent County Council on **0300 041 8181** between 9am and 5pm, Mon – Fri, or on 0300 041 9191 at all other times. If in doubt, ring 0300 041 8181 and ask. All reported defects are inspected by Highway Inspectors. Emergency repairs are prioritised.

If you need to report a potential **emergency** situation (something that is likely to cause an immediate injury or death), please call KCC **immediately**. For non-emergency issues you can either call KCC on 0300 041 8181 or use their online fault reporting form at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. It will be helpful if you can give precise details about the size and location of the fault, and the postcode. It is easier to report online as there is a map to use to pinpoint the location.

[With acknowledgement to the websites of KCC, The Highways Agency, Canterbury City Council]

Dave Goddard

Its Your Neighbourhood

The OHDS has entered St George's Garden, the Fire Station beds and the Milton Road beds into 'Its Your Neighbourhood', which is run by the Royal Horticultural Society. They show what can be done with a bombsite or a windswept corner or an unadopted road, and we are keen for their views and advice. This is linked to Canterbury's entry for 'Britain in Bloom'. In 2015 Canterbury got a gold award for 'South and Southeast in Bloom', so this year it is entering the big league, 'Britain in Bloom'. The RHS are also running a campaign to 'Green Grey Britain'. If you can help by making the front of your house interesting and floriferous, please do – hundreds of people every day see your front garden, or your window box!

Sophie Scott, Green Team lead

SOCIAL EVENTS

OHDS SPRING PARTY

The Society held its Spring Party at the Kent and Canterbury Club on 11th March. Members and friends chatted in the bar then sat with friends, old and new. Before dinner, Chris Tucker, the OHDS Secretary, welcomed everyone and gave a brief summary of the Society's regular activities, as well as listing the local issues we are currently involved in - the impact of students on the City, the underpasses, the Local Plan, and planning in general. Chris thanked the Committee members who spend many hours representing the Society at meetings and on panels so that South Canterbury residents' voices can be heard.

After a splendid meal, we all attempted to tackle George Liddle's fiendish quiz based, this year, on Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and guests on the winning table all received a bottle of wine. The raffle raised needed funds for OHDS. Many thanks to members, friends, Waitrose and Tesco Express for donating prizes for the raffle.

Chris thanked our guests for coming, the Committee for arranging the event, and the K&C staff for their excellent service and meal.

Marion Bell, Social Secretary

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The following Officers have been re-elected for 2016: Chairman: Mike Brain; Secretary: Michael Steed; Treasurer: Graham Wood; Honorary Officers: Minutes Secretary: Susi Brain; Archivist: Marian Heath. Representative on OHDS Committee: Graham Wood.

New members continue to join but sadly Dorothy Harris, a former member and contributor to the forthcoming book "Longport Through The Ages" died in January.

Members joined with South Canterbury Residents Association for a walk along Old Dover Road in February. Our book "Old Dover Road-Past and Present" was most useful as a guide.

We continue to record oral histories of local people; and four more were added during the year, together with four other written sets of memories. Research by Michael Steed, assisted by Carolyn Edrich, David Lewis and Doreen Rosman (and utilising earlier research by the late Frank Panton) has established the date of the final public hanging at Oaten Hill and an article will appear in a future Newsletter.

University of Kent Lecturer, Ms Una McIlvenna wishes to research ballads sung to accompany prisoners condemned to hang, on their journey from prison to the gallows. It is hoped to link this topic up with an event in June.

Work continues on our latest book, "Longport Through The Ages", and notification of a discounted purchase price for pre orders (£8.00) was included in the last Newsletter.

The local History Group will be promoting the erection in the car park of a "story board" notice relating the history of Holmans Meadow to replace the small metal sign which is currently poorly visible. We meet at 10.30am at Kent and Canterbury Club every second Tuesday on alternate months, beginning in January. Please come along.

Visit our page of the Oaten Hill web site at www.oatenhill.org.uk/local-history to see details of (and to order) our publications.

Mike Brain, OHDS Local History Group



You have paid your
subscription for 2016,
THANK YOU

OATEN HILL AND DISTRICT SOCIETY COMMITTEE LIST for 2016

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