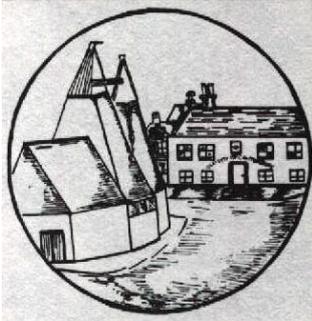


OATEN HILL & SOUTH CANTERBURY ASSOCIATION

WINTER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2017

No. 1



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AIMS and OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW ASSOCIATION

The Association's Aims and Objectives were drafted during the merger discussions by the representatives of OHDS and SCRA, and incorporated in the draft Constitution, and thus form the basis on which members agreed to the merger.

The Constitution's first two sub-clauses read:

- 3.1 The Association is a non-party-political voluntary group constituted to represent, promote and protect the interests of all those resident in the Association's area.
- 3.2 The aim of the Association is to support and improve the quality of life of our community.

There follow some examples, which are not exhaustive, referring in particular to: community spirit, cultural and educational activities; balance between residential, business and educational interests; housing quality and the built environment; conservation and green spaces; recreational facilities; safer travel, sustainable transport; and maintenance and improvement of our physical environment.

The Constitution then lists the means it expects to use in supporting these aims: providing a forum through newsletters, meetings and social activities; encouraging residents to join OHSCA, and consulting and informing members; dealing as appropriate with proposed development and licensing applications; encouraging enhancement of amenities including gardening and tree-planting; liaising with Councils and other bodies and local groups; and providing support when localised issues arise.

SOCIAL & NEIGHBOURHOOD CALENDAR (FOR NEXT 3 MONTHS)

26th February: Gardening and planting group (GIG) meet at 11.30am, at 33 South Canterbury Rd (host: Sally Perkins)

16th March: Local History Group at K&C Club, Old Dover Rd.

Every Wed morning: Towards Your 10,000 Steps. Meet at K&C Hospital gates opposite Cromwell Rd, at 9.30am

OVER 4000 NEW HOMES FOR SOUTHERN CANTERBURY – WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND AIR POLLUTION?

(see pages 3–5)

FROM THE CHAIR

OHSCA – a New Beginning

Two well-known Canterbury residents' associations, Oaten Hill & District Society and South Canterbury Residents Association, merged last November to form a new community group, Oaten Hill & South Canterbury Association (OHSCA – pronounced 'Oscar').

The Association covers the area south-east of the city walls from Rhodaus Town to Lady Wootton's Green, Pilgrims Way and east to Lichfield Avenue along the New Dover Road, and south to Ridlands Farm, including South Canterbury Road, Nunnery Road and Oaten Hill. A map showing the OHSCA boundaries will be on the website (ohsca.org) to be launched within the next few weeks.

OHSCA is led by a group of volunteers committed to helping the local community. To do this requires the Association to be supportive, proactive, and reactive. OHDS, with its 40-year history, and SCRA, despite its relative youth, both created valuable traditions. OHSCA will continue to gather and share information on local planning issues and applications, organise social activities, and research local history. Involvement with public transport planning is also anticipated, as well as support for volunteer action on litter and graffiti. From time to time matters arise in the local community that come either as unpleasant surprises or welcome possibilities for progress. OHSCA aims to react constructively to issues whenever we have the means to do so.

Being proactive means that OHSCA should, within its capacity, be a force for local progress. We should campaign, not only against matters we collectively dislike, but also in favour of improvements – such as tree planting in public areas, now a strong local tradition. The new website for OHSCA (ohsca.org) will offer a ready means for submitting your comments and suggestions. You can also email or write to us. We would like to hear from all members of our community, whether members or not, about what you would like us to try to achieve.

Projects that I personally wish to help take forward this year include the growing city-wide campaign to monitor air quality – now a serious health concern across the whole of Canterbury – and creation of a new series of talks and lectures on contemporary issues affecting life in

East Kent, and historical accounts of our area. I hope to have something to report on both in the Spring Newsletter.

Dick Vane-Wright

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first Newsletter, sent to all 2300 homes in the OHSCA area. The newsletters intend to reflect the interests of our members, and the Editors welcome submitted articles, views and comments. In this issue we have contributions about the hospital, graffiti removal, and the post-office in Longport.

Membership. If you are not a member of OHSCA we hope you will join. For £5 per year per household you will receive all quarterly newsletters, local news, OHSCA email alerts, and invitations and notices about our social and gardening events, talks, walks, and local history group meetings. On p.11 there is a Membership Form which you can cut out, copy, or download from the new website.

Even if you were a member of OHDS and/or SCRA in 2016, if you wish to continue as a member of OHSCA, *please fill out and return a membership form now*, together with your 2017 subscription. We can then also be sure to have all your details correct – including, with permission, your email address(es). If you don't wish to join or continue, you might still like to receive occasional emails from us about important issues or public events; if so, please send just your email address to info@ohsca.org.

Help Wanted. Our Treasurer needs someone to lend a hand with the annual accounts in September. If you would like to assist, please contact Alison Culverwell (Tel: 761854).

We would also like to hear from other potential volunteers with special skills and interests. We need new faces to help with licensing regulations, trees (e.g. with regard to felling and replacement applications), editing, and social events. You will find on p.12 a list of names of OHSCA members who are on the committee and/or who are responsible for certain areas of activity on your behalf. In the first instance, please contact the Hon Secretary for the most appropriate person for you to contact.

Greta Cotterrell and Dick Vane-Wright

Draft Local Plan and the Mountfield Park Planning Application

On 13th December 2016 our Council *Planning Committee* gave permission for 140 homes to be built near Cobham Place, east of the New Dover Road. This will form Phase 1A of Mountfield Park (CCC Planning Application CA/16/00600) – a 15-year plan to create 3900 new homes on 560 acres of southern Canterbury farmland. The Committee also granted outline permission for the whole scheme which, in addition to 3900 homes, is expected to include business units, schools and a health centre.

Three days later the government-appointed Planning Inspector released details of modifications he felt should now be made to the Council's Draft Local Plan – the document which sets out the new homes target for the next 15 years, and prescribes sites on which houses and apartments can be built.

The current Draft Plan first came to public attention three years ago. Version 1 included the proposal to build 4000 new homes on what is now the Mountfield Park site. This attracted 7000 responses, voicing serious concerns from people across the whole District about the impact of the proposals. Many representations were made by southern Canterbury residents, including extensive documents from OHDS and SCRA, concerning traffic, air quality, open spaces, loss of farmland, environmental impact, world heritage and conservation – all seemingly unheeded even now. Thus when version 2 of the Draft Plan appeared, little had changed.

Version 2 was sent to the Planning Inspector, who then convened public hearings during 2015. Both SCRA and OHDS continued to make representations but now supported by Southern Canterbury Alliance (SCA) and the Alliance of Canterbury Residents' Associations (ACRA). Our interventions, however, failed to impress the Inspector – who felt the housing target set by CCC was too low! Eventually he proposed a modest increase, from 15600 to 16000 for the entire District, but to be achieved more quickly. As a result, the Council added land at Thanington to the Plan.

The only comment relating directly to South Canterbury in the Inspector's latest letter is to remove the Kent & Canterbury from the list of other proposed housing sites (if the hospital could have been re-sited and then demolished before 2030 it would have provided land for 500

more homes). Ridlands Farm is a site for another 300. The Council will open a public consultation on Ridlands in the New Year. The Inspector is also considering further evidence on air quality from Professor Stephen Peckham (Director of the Centre for Health Service Studies, University of Kent) before issuing his final conclusions.

CCC states that without an agreed Local Plan in place, a free-for-all will result which could mean planning applications being submitted anywhere and everywhere, with good chances of acceptance given recent changes in government planning policy intended to accelerate house building.

What is now known as Mountfield Park has been in the current Draft Plan from its inception. Since the detailed application for Phase 1A was submitted last year there have been three opportunities for formal consultation. The extensive comments from local residents and community groups were posted on the CCC website for all to see, either in the public comments section, or as "Associated Documents". Despite all the constructive suggestions, only minimal changes have been made by the developer.

On 13th December, when the application was heard, all local residents' associations were allowed a 3-minute speaking slot – amounting to a full hour of public comment. Acting as coordinator, ACRA helped all groups, including OHSCA, take full advantage by using each presentation to focus on specific concerns. Additionally, Bruce Bamber (Railton TPC Ltd) and Prof Peckham acted as expert witnesses, on traffic planning and air quality respectively. Serious concerns were expressed about:

- Loss of high grade agricultural land
- Underestimation of traffic flows, unworkable proposals for road junctions, absence of eastern relief road, and unavailability of KCC proposals for improvements to the A28 and city ring road
- Air quality – current breaches of pollution limits and further deterioration
- World Heritage Site sensitivity
- Pilgrims Way conservation
- Proximity of new buildings to Barton Estate, height and design, and doubts over accuracy of drawings
- Lack of open space in existing areas

- Piecemeal rather than cumulative impact assessments on traffic, air quality, environment and heritage
- Relegation of “affordable” housing to final stages
- No provision, apparently, of social housing.

The ‘debate’ among Councillors that followed, with the notable exception of our local City members, was a huge disappointment. With no discussion of the numerous points raised (several expressed with passion), it was unclear whether the nine out-of-city Councillors who voted in favour had sufficiently weighed the public representations against the prospect of foregoing short-term government-funded new-homes bonus payments for the Council.

This all gave the strong impression that our Council is not concerned about air quality, and is willing to accept traffic proposals based on discredited flow-rate data, unrealistic hopes for a shift to bus and cycle use, and junction changes that will cause more problems than they solve – notably in Monastery Street, Dover Street, Upper Chantry Lane, Nunnery Fields, Ethelbert Road and St Lawrence Road.

OHSCA as a matter of priority will assess all future planning applications for our area against the KCC traffic plans and known air quality levels. In the meantime we await the KCC A28 review, of critical importance if the City’s traffic congestion is to be relieved.

Central government will shortly be issuing a White Paper on housing targets – which has led one Local Authority (Durham) to suspend implementation of its Local Plan. Questions remain about inconsistencies in government planning policy. Is green land sacrosanct or not? Although the Mountfield site is not Green Belt, it is excellent farmland – a real loss in relation to food prices and food security.

Whitehall and its Inspectors set housing targets for each council, with severe financial penalties for non-achievement. On the evidence of 13th December, local councillors feel decisions are out of their hands. Have local ‘consultations’ become mere tick-box-exercises rather than a means of securing genuine public engagement?

An application has now been made to the National Planning Casework Unit of the Department for Communities and Local

Government for the Secretary of State to call in the planning application on grounds of non-compliance with various regulations – but any constructive outcome seems very uncertain. So what now? Although our campaign failed to change the course our Council has set, there is still important work to be done. This will include:

- Monitoring the Conditions (details of implementation), which are numerous and substantial – to ensure the council gets the best deal and makes the developer stick to it; we may also be able to suggest useful amendments to the Conditions
- Monitoring traffic and air pollution during building of the estate – a long task spanning 12–15 years. If the impacts are worse than predicted, we should pressurise the council to demand effective action to reduce them
- Monitoring the plans for affordable housing – there is no such housing at all in Phase 1A – and trying to stop the developer evading these commitments (as often happens in practice)
- Working with the developer to get the best possible designs for the subsequent phases
- Trying to influence future CCC policy on transport and housing, and performance reviews of the Local Plan
- Engaging in the upcoming Ridlands Farm consultation.

A lot of work. But – to be blunt – because most residents’ associations failed to do enough during 2011–13, the Council stole a march on us and we were under-prepared for the avalanche of information they released with the Draft Local Plan, much of it inaccurate, and we failed to make sufficient impression on the process.

While new housing is imperative for Canterbury, the City as a whole needs an honest debate about scale and detail – to ensure balanced and informed decisions. Our monitoring can play a key role in this ongoing process. Moreover, the very status and significance of the Local Plan itself – which has yet to be judged by the Inspector, let alone adopted by the Council – is another major question.

Please keep an eye out for developments and updates via the OHSCA website, and do register for our email Alerts.

David Kemsley and Tim Carlyle

PLANNING REPORT For 2016

The increasing pace of building development has been felt more than ever in the last year, with a constant flow of applications within our area, plus Mountfield Park now looming nearby.

Mountfield Park. An enormous amount of effort by resident associations went into responding to this application, particularly about the effects of traffic and road proposals within our own, already congested, area. Detailed responses were submitted by OHDS, SCRA, SARA (St Augustines Residents Association), SCA (South Canterbury Alliance of residents' associations), and several individuals with specific high-grade expertise. OHDS also joined with others in commissioning and submitting a professional analysis and criticism of the developers' transport plan. Great credit must go to a number of particular individuals, who have put in many hours of work in co-ordinating all this. The specific input from OHDS was a detailed criticism of the road proposals within our area, particularly the banning of right turns at junctions, which would transfer traffic on to the side roads as well as causing detours and delays in journeys. We contributed real experience of traffic problems, against the theoretical claims and predictions put forward in the application.

The situation seems to be that our local authorities are colluding with the developers in the pretence that thousands of new homes in the area will not significantly increase traffic levels, this remarkable notion only supported by the most unbelievable assumptions. Despite all our efforts the application was approved.

Annual Review. During my third year as OHDS committee member for planning we reviewed 125 applications and commented on 39 of them, 5 approving, 18 neutral and 16 objecting, broadly similar figures to the previous year, when we commented on 37. At the time of writing, the final outcome has supported our comments in 12 cases, not supported them in 15, and 12 outcomes either are undecided or not applicable: again, broadly similar to the previous year. Once again there have been many applications for intensified development, with family houses being replaced by blocks of flats, back gardens being built over, and the relatively open country-town character of Canterbury gradually being destroyed by 5 and 6 storey buildings. At one Planning Committee meeting I

put the case against the sixth storey on the latest student block at Rhodaus Town, to almost total lack of interest from the councillors. I fear that the very special heritage and character of the city, as we know it, is thoughtlessly being lost forever. If this continues, future generations will find only pockets of historic buildings tucked in between modern blocks, our current pleasant suburbs changed into urbanised blocks of flats, and traditional family houses – if there are any – banished into what is now farmland far from the city centre, well beyond walking distance and any sense of connection with Canterbury as a community.

We have had some positive indirect outcomes. The plan for retirement flats at the cricket ground, previously approved despite widespread opposition from us and from others, was replaced by a modified design. The revised plan was duly approved and is now under construction, with comprehensive landscaping plans which we have been monitoring. We complained sharply when a row of screening trees against the Old Dover Road, marked as “to be retained”, was unexpectedly cut down. Replanting is due to take place this winter.

On the site of The Bing, after an appeal by OHDS at a Planning meeting, the architects have added some landscaping for the flats to be built, clothing the internal courtyard with greenery.

Trees. Although the importance of trees to our environment is increasingly being recognised, a number of applications for felling or lopping them are being submitted without professional arboricultural reports, verifiable evidence for claims of damage, or even clear location maps. Anyone thinking of tree work which needs planning permission is recommended to ensure they have a fully qualified arboriculturalist to prepare the application properly.

Conclusion. I'm happy to say that in a number of cases our involvement as a residents' association has led to constructive contact with the property owners. It easily happens that planning applications are made without the owners being aware of local concerns, and friendly discussions can lead both to satisfactory outcomes and to better contacts between local residents. Some of our residents have written to the local paper to complain about unsuitable modern building design in residential areas, yet no objections from residents were put forward originally and the committee accordingly took a

neutral view. We must urge people to sign up for OHSCA e-mail planning alerts and view planning applications; if you have any objections you can easily register them online. If there is definite local opposition then our committee would usually support the objections, but we cannot do much after permission has been granted.

Keith Rishworth

GREEN TEAM: past and present

Over the past eight years we have developed several little street gardens – the flower beds by the Odeon (St George’s Garden), the Fire Station beds, the little bed in St Augustine’s Road, the three beds in Milton Road (between South Canterbury Road and Cromwell Road) and the planter in Albert Road. We are so grateful for all the help given in 2016 which helped these projects to flourish.

Last year we entered St George’s Garden, the Fire Station Beds and Milton Road for ‘Its Your Neighbourhood’, as our contribution to Canterbury’s entry to Britain in Bloom run by the RHS, and were adjudged “thriving”. We’d like to do even better in 2017. Weeding, deadheading, planting, watering – none of these takes a lot of time and is very rewarding. Litter picking is also part of weeding! If you would like to get involved, please contact Sophie Scott or Deirdre Hawkes. If you don’t feel up to gardening but would like to chip in towards the cost of plants and trees, we’d be very grateful.

In October we planted bulbs in St Lawrence Forstal for the pleasure and delight of residents and all who use this gate to the hospital. Thanks to everyone who turned out in the rain. In the past we made plantings in the big shrubbery on the New Dover Road by Lichfield Avenue. Serco are kindly going to remove some dead shrubs and we need to fill some spaces there this spring. If you would like to help with this or the gardens, please contact either Sophie Scott or Deirdre Hawkes so we can discuss how you can help.

Tree planting: Over the past years we have planted nearly thirty street trees. This winter we are planting, with welcome help from Cllr Michael Northey and the residents of Ersham Road (thank you all), two more trees in Ersham Road. We are also planting, with help from local

residents (thank you), a tree at the corner of Old Dover Rd and Cowdrey Place.

Oaten Hill & District trees planted 2011-2015

- ❖ 2004 – 2010: Residents of Ersham Road collected money for eleven trees to fill gaps in street, first with CCC, then after 2007 with KCC who had no budget for planting any trees. Using our contribution to CCC in 2004 as a precedent, I managed to get KCC to accept some trees if I raised the cash for them.
- ❖ Winter 2010: OHDS contributed towards Ersham Road’s tree planting appeal (£50)
- ❖ Spring 2011: ‘Great Big Tree’ appeal launched by OHDS, building on Sophie’s experience with Ersham Road. Response was amazing. OHDS was the pioneer scheme as KCC recognised that people might be prepared to fund trees on their doorstep voluntarily.
- ❖ 2011: CCC constructed the big planters in St George’s Garden and planted 2 Corylus (Turkish hazels).
- ❖ Feb 2012: Nine trees planted: 3 Acer campestre in New Dover Rd, 1 Amelanchier in St Augustine’s Rd, 1 Crataegus outside 12 Ersham Rd, 2 Sorbus ‘Sheerwater’ seedling in Upper Chantry Lane. Ersham Road residents also paid for 2 trees: a Judas tree outside no 14 and an Acer negundo ‘Flamingo’ outside no 27.
- ❖ Spring 2012: Lime ‘Orange Globe’ planted outside Fire Station next to bookies.
- ❖ May 2012: Flower beds outside the fire station constructed and two trees planted: Pyrus calleryana ‘Chanticleer’ (doing well), and cornus controversa variegata (died).
- ❖ Oct 2012: Magnolia planted in Lichfield Ave.
- ❖ Oct 2012: A dead tree at the Fire Station was replaced by Amelanchier ballerina.
- ❖ Nov 2012: 2 Sorbus aria ‘Lutescens’ (gift of Jean Birchall) planted at K& C hospital. They were replaced in 2014 by two Pyrus ‘Chanticleer’, also funded by Jean Birchall.
- ❖ Dec 2012: 2 more Acer campestre outside BT on NDR, 1 new Sorbus ‘Sheerwater’ seedling in Upper Chantry Lane, 1 replacement Sorbus ‘Sheerwater’ seedling for the ex-tree in UCL, KCC added an extra tree in NDR.
- ❖ Nov 2013: 1 Amelanchier and 1 Crataegus planted at junction Lesley Avenue and Cromwell Road

- ❖ Nov 2013: Contribution to KCC for 8 Liquidambar instead of 8 field maples in St Lawrence Rd.
- ❖ Jan 2014: Sophie and Pete Scott planted 1 Prunus in Ersham Road for their ruby wedding.
- ❖ 2014: Cllr Michael Northey funded four trees, two in Churchill Rd and two on the NDR, all Prunus. Cllr Martin Vye funded two Amelanchier in Lesley Avenue /Cromwell Rd.
- ❖ 2015: 1 Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer' planted on 20/11/15 in South Canterbury Road (Milton Road); KCC kindly funded two cherries in Ersham Road.

Sophie Scott

SOCIAL and NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVITIES GROUP

Since the formation of OHSCA the former SCRA Social Committee, now incorporated into the Neighbourhood Activities Group to reflect our main emphasis on organising activities rather than purely social gatherings, have agreed to continue arranging events that bring members and residents together. Our plans for 2017 will include some kind of social event in mid-July, as well as organising the annual plant and produce shares. Naturally, we want to reflect the wider interests of the OHSCA membership but as we are a small group we will need your support if we are to extend our range of activities and events. We would very much welcome additional members to assist with existing events and help plan new ones.

We would especially like to hear from members who are supportive of OHSCA aims but have not felt willing to join the committee. Please contact hazelvanewright@btinternet.com

In addition to the above, we have been interested in establishing a '**lending library**' of **gardening and DIY tools** and other household equipment that could be shared within the wider OHSCA membership. If you are interested in this scheme, or have an item you are prepared to lend, please contact Claire Leggatt: claire.leggatt@gmail.com

We have also discussed the production of a **South Canterbury Community Cook Book** to include those favourite recipes you would like to share with others. The current plan is to get something in production for Christmas 2017. If you have a recipe to share, or are interested in

getting involved with the production of the recipe book, please contact Alison Culverwell.

Other activities for the coming year are regular Wednesday morning short walks (**Towards Your 10,000 Steps**) in the area, and an archive film show featuring the area of Canterbury covered by OHSCA.

The OHSCA membership is composed of interesting and creative people who find themselves living in the Southern part of the city of Canterbury. We know there will be challenges ahead but together we also have the opportunity to build a strong sense of community, which could do much to balance those negatives. Please support the Neighbourhood Activities Group by attending our events and give serious thought to how you might help to bring our community closer together.

Hazel Vane-Wright

GARDENING INTEREST GROUP

The Gardening Interest Group (GIG) was formed within SCRA about 18 months ago as a network of people who enjoy gardening and sharing home-grown plants and vegetables, and are keen to link with others locally; it is a group for enthusiasts rather than experts. OHDS members joined in this evolving group and to date activities have included visiting each others' gardens or allotments to learn, share ideas and expertise, celebrate successes and commiserate over the disappointments. GIG has held a seed swap, visited specialist nurseries and a local vineyard. With the founding of OHSCA plans for 2017 will be firmed up at the "kicking off the gardening year" meeting on 26th February, when members are invited to bring seed/ plant catalogues, seeds/ seedling to share as well as ideas for the calendar. Definite dates/ events for 2017 that are supported by the group, are the Annual Plant share on Monday 29th May and the Plant and Produce share on Monday August 28th (both are Bank Holidays). Venues and times for these meetings tbc.

If you are interested in joining or hearing more about this group please contact either:

*Sally Perkins (sally@perkinsnet.plus.com)
or Alison Culverwell*

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

OHSCA acts as a forum for you; we keep a sharp eye on planning and licensing applications, we run social events and talks, we have a thriving Local History Group and we have now set up a Green Team to continue the good work of tree planting and making gardens out of unloved corners of our area. If you support any of these activities, please join us by completing the membership form, and send it to the Membership Secretary. If you wish to receive the longer coloured emailed version of the newsletter, let me know with your email address.

It would be most helpful if you tell us what areas particularly interest you. One of the factors helping us live to a ripe old age is to be actively involved with your neighbourhood, so do join us now! If you have previously been a member of OHDS or SCRA, your annual subscription is now due. Completing the membership form will help me check that all your details are correct. If you would like to add a donation please tell us on the form what you would like us to apply it to. The committee will be very grateful for your help.

Sophie Scott

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Members of the OHDS Local History Group visited Barton Court School in Summer 2016.



Group photograph (L to R):

Graham Wood, Derek Ray, Jock Asbury-Bailey, Marian Heath, Elizabeth Dorling, Carolyn Edrich, Susi and Mike Brain

Our meetings are bi-monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at 10.15 am at the Kent & Canterbury Club in Old Dover Road. The only

requirement is that those attending should be members of OHSCA, so all members are welcome. Room hire and coffee: £2.50 each.

The dates for 2017 are: 10th Jan (our AGM), 14th March, 9th May, 11th July, 12th September and 14th November.

Longport Through The Ages

The Oaten Hill Local History Group has published the latest in their series of books on local streets. Longport Through The Ages is an illustrated walk along Longport describing the history of the present and former buildings, including the Abbey, former Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Technical School, Sessions House and Prison, Smiths' Almshouses, Barton Court, the sites of former development destroyed by WWII bombing, and the present houses and businesses. The recounting of 2000 years of history is combined with the memories of some of the residents, past and present, of living, working and going to school in the street.

The book can be ordered, price £8.00 + £1.20 p&p from the Local History Group's web page oatenhill.org.uk/local-history.shtml where details of all the books are available, or from Graham Wood, Tel. 01227 472932.



Charabancs outside the original K&C hospital, Longport, July 1929. Photo: R. Waters

YOUR LETTERS AND VIEWS

Local Hospital Services

The Committee is very much aware of concerns in Canterbury, and especially in the OHSCA Area, about the future of the Kent & Canterbury Hospital in the light of the rising levels of NHS

deficits, and of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (the STP) for Health and Social Services in Kent and Medway, recently promulgated.

The main drive of the STP is towards the progressive relocation of as many health services as possible away from the acute hospitals, to General Practice and other local centres. The effects of this would include some concentration and relocation of acute hospital services, transfers of non-acute services to local centres, and much-increased reliance on medical and social services support in people's own homes. The STP does not as yet name any hospital Trusts or sites for which these proposals would have implications. As part of the STP process, a Survey was conducted, with a closing date of 23 December. This was open for personal responses only – not for organisations – and was structured with no provision for comments on acute hospital services or their location.

The Committee will monitor the situation, and would be grateful to receive any factual information from members relevant to the progress of the STP proposals, and the information will be useful in assisting Committee discussions.

Denis Linfoot

Bridge Cleaning and Protection against graffiti initiative

The black brick walls as you go over the railway track on Pilgrims Way were mistreated for many years with layers of graffiti and patches of paint in non-matching colours. Councillor Michael Northey has kindly secured a KCC Combined Members' grant to enable Barton Residents' Association to professionally return the brickwork to its original state and for residents to paint the walls in one coat of anti-graffiti paint, which will allow graffiti to be repeatedly removed with only soapy water for many years to come. Network Rail have given us a two year licence to protect the other bridges: New Dover Road, Old Dover Road and Nunnery Fields. They cannot fund this themselves due to the non-prioritisation of graffiti deemed not "obscene" or "offensive", a policy shared with BT, Royal Mail and KCC structures. However, they have promised to repair the brickwork and clean the graffiti off the Landsdown Path footbridge in May 2017.

A 5 litre tin of Nu Guard AG anti-graffiti paint covers 40m²- 50m², enough to coat one bridge and costs £141. Professional steam jet washing one wall is £180, and cleaning of long term graffiti is around £355; the alternative of painting the areas ourselves is also permitted under the licence. Mild graffiti removers such as De-Solv-It cost around £7 per litre and are safe for amateur use and for vigorous scrubbing work against fresh graffiti on masonry. Any offers of help with cleaning, or donations towards the cost of these paints will be very welcome.

Cathy Sales

Our POST OFFICE: use it or lose it!

Post offices are seen by most of us as a vital part of any community. Sadly, due to changing 'economics', many have been lost (such as our former sub-post-office in Oaten Hill), and more will surely follow. The OHSCA area still benefits from one, originally on Lower Bridge Street, now located within the Londis convenience store at 15-16 Longport (CT1 1PE), where the counter is run most expertly and efficiently by store owner Mrs Kirti Patel. Kirti is invariably on hand 06.30–21.00 Monday to Friday, and at week-ends too (Saturday 07.00–21.00; Sunday (08.00–20.00). So, if you value having a local post office, please remember to use Longport – otherwise we might lose that one too!

Sophie Scott & Dick Vane-Wright

THE OATEN HILL MYSTERY

(ctd from the Autumn OHDS Newsletter)

The late Henry Lefever, a former president of OHDS, writing in 1980 (1) said that the gallows were in use "up to 1799", and this date has been repeated by several others, hardly surprising as Henry was quoting a 1948 article by the respected Cathedral archivist William Urry. As the putative 1999 bicentenary approached, I researched the gallows history so that this anniversary could be duly celebrated. Alas, it turned out that the 1799 date was a misreading of a footnote added to the third edition (1825) of Gostling's "Walks in & about Canterbury". This recorded the erection of a temporary scaffold at the Westgate gaol in 1799; the second edition of Gostling had referred to the Oaten Hill scaffold as if still existing in 1777, but neither offers any evidence as to when it was pulled down. Other sources, e.g. Hasted, confirm

that what happened in 1799 was the first use of a Westgate Tower gallows.

Last year, with considerable help from others (2), I established the last use of the Oaten Hill gallows as being on Friday 17 January 1783; Thomas Stokes was hanged at about a quarter to one on that day for "armed robbery". His case, as recorded in the contemporary columns of the Kentish Gazette and the Gentleman's Magazine, was far from straightforward robbery; rather it seems he was put to death, protesting his innocence of the alleged robbery, for an "abominable" insult to a gentleman! I will write more of that interesting case in the next/ a future OHDS newsletter.

Neither the Gazette nor the Magazine account makes clear whether this was on the permanent gallows or a specially erected one, though the later references to a scaffold specially erected for the event at the Westgate Tower from 1799 onwards imply that the previous Canterbury practice had been to use a gallows already standing at the traditional site. The Gazette confirmed that the 1783 hanging was "at Oaten Hill", but the Gentleman's Magazine muddles the evidence, telling its readers that Stokes "was executed on Peterhill, near Canterbury" – was this a simple mistake, or was it an alternative name for Oaten Hill? Does anyone know of a Peterhill in the Canterbury area?

It may well be that by then Oaten Hill was the name of what had become an open space, the mound itself having gone. Doidge's map of Canterbury (surveyed 1752) shows an unnamed lozenge-shaped area, with a path all round and a road across the middle on the present alignment of the top part of modern Dover Street. The 1768 Matthews & Wren map shows this area in a similar way, naming it Gallows Green. On both we see two apparently grassed triangles, one where The Shrubbery's trees now grow and the other now a car-park. By 1798, when Hasted wrote about the city's previous place of execution he stated in a footnote (implying a recent development) that the city had sold the site "to a private individual" and that it had been converted into a pleasure ground (3).

So where exactly was the Oaten mound or hill? Matthews & Wren (1768) show the gallows quite clearly in what is now the Shrubbery garden, so that presumably is where Thomas Stokes met his end (1783). But Lefever, following Urry, located the mound further south, roughly where the Oast now stands and the cars now park. Was the mound levelled by 1752, as Doidge's survey implies? If so, was the curved route at the top of Dover Street run across the site of the mound, which had lain in the middle of the modern space? Or did this curved route originally run round the old mound, with traffic steadily eroding it (Lefever's suggestion)? Or

did Urry get the original site wrong, as he did the 1799 date?

Indeed, do we need a car park excavation here in Canterbury to pin down just where the original Oaten Hill stood?

Notes:

(1) "Oaten Hill" pp 41-7 of "The Parish of St. Martin and St. Paul" Historical Essays in Memory of James Hobbs (ed. Margaret Sparks).

(2) The late Frank Panton researched death sentences passed in Canterbury, listing 22 sentences in 16 trials between 1737 and 1817, of whom the majority were not hanged; his list is available in his Ph D thesis (Finances and government in Canterbury, eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century) in the Templeman Library. Doreen Rosman kindly put me on to this list; David Lewis supplied me with the reference to the Gentleman's Magazine and Carolyn Edrich helped me trawl through micro-film of the Kentish Gazette in the Beaney.

(3) Edward Hasted "The History of the County of Kent" 2nd ed, Vol XI, p 103

Michael Steed



Kirti welcomes you at her post counter (see p. 9)



Croquet at "Tea on the Lawn" social event, 2016

**Oaten Hill and South Canterbury Association (OHSCA)
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ACRA = Alliance of pan Canterbury Residents' Associations

SCA = Southern Canterbury Alliance

NB: If you wish information or discuss an issue, please contact Hon Sec or info@ohsca.org