



OATEN HILL & SOUTH CANTERBURY ASSOCIATION

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The Editor hopes you have enjoyed the weekly bulletins. This is OHSCA's last issue, as we all now hope, with the government's easing of lockdown, that our quarterly newsletters and the OHSCA website and/or emails will suffice to provide our members with local information and news of plans and events. A timely reminder from Sophie Scott, Membership Secretary, to all readers that the annual fee of £5 per household ensures continuing membership of OHSCA. Please check in case you have forgotten to pay your 2019 subscription. Details of how to pay were in last week's Bulletin #11 (or contact Sophie Scott).

Dame Vera. On the 18th June news came of Dame Vera Lynn's death (at the grand age of 103), a singer who had boosted people's morale over and beyond the War years, and who had recently said that, in a time of national crisis, "we must all help each other to find moments of joy." A message to remember in the present national crisis, for it seems COVID-19 will be with us a long time yet.

Leasehold or Freehold – who has the advantage? Some of our members may be living in leasehold properties or about to purchase one. Over the years, leasehold has been open to dodgy dealings by unscrupulous freehold owners and developers, and it is good to hear that Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has responded to Sir Peter Bottomley's pressure for the government to act on the long-awaited leasehold reforms, saying that the "draft legislation" will be with MPs for scrutiny "shortly" – possibly before the summer recess. The commonest problems reported by leaseholders are high management fees, little or no control over work done to the property, lack of transparency about the costs, and unfair service charges. Leaseholders may also find the cost of building insurance to be very high.

On trees and woodland. In *The Ecologist* (16 June edition), Darren Moorcroft, chief executive of the Woodland Trust, is quoted as saying: "Despite huge interest in trees and woods, new statistics show we are a long way from where we need to be"...."we must also do far more to look after the trees and woods we already have." The government has committed to planting 30,000 hectares of new woods in England by 2025 as part of meeting the overall targets set by the UK Government's advisory Committee on Climate Change, requiring around 5,000 hectares of trees to go in the ground each year. But the figures for 2019-20 show just 2,330 hectares of new forest was planted in England. Planting of trees, particularly in England, is well below where it needs to be to meet targets to help absorb carbon emissions. As you know, OHSCA campaigns tirelessly to stop the unnecessary felling of trees, and supports local efforts to preserve hedges and green spaces that encourage wild flowers, pollinating insects, butterflies and birds.

Testing of people with Covid-19 symptoms – 119 is the new national phone number.

Anyone over the age of 5 with symptoms of Covid-19, as well as people living in the same household, can request a test. You need to get the test done in the first 5 days of having symptoms. You can either drive to a testing centre or request a home testing kit. Only ask for a test if you or someone you live with have current symptoms. (Note: the tests at present only show if you have the virus, not if you have had it in the past.) You can book online (<https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test>) or phone 119. The testing appointment service is often busy, but bookings re-open each morning.

Take Off, a Kent-based charity working in Canterbury, has recently been awarded a grant of £4,000 from the Kent Community Foundation Coronavirus Emergency Fund to support people to improve their physical and mental health. The grant has enabled Take Off to adapt to being able to support clients online and through phone calls, especially now during the pandemic. You can contact the charity to book a phone chat with one of their peer workers by calling 01227 788 211.