



The Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust

A Safe pair of hands

A new roof for the Palace Tower

Emergency repair work was carried out on the North-West Tower of Otford Palace in 1982.

It appears that the parapet was in a dangerous condition and part of the brickwork on the upper part of the Tower had developed an outward curve. A Technical Services Officer from SDC inspected the Tower in early 1981 and confirmed that “if left the Tower would be in imminent danger of collapse” and “failing the necessary repairs being carried out the Tower would be unsafe to a degree that footpath [SR40] would have to be closed to the public by next winter.” David Prestage, who was a councillor at the time, recalls work being carried out on the roof.

A specification of the work to be undertaken was approved by the Department of the Environment in the Autumn of 1981 and the work was carried out in the spring of 1982. It is not clear whether this approval constituted ‘Scheduled Monument Consent.’ There is no record in the Parish Council minutes of Planning Approval being sought or granted. It may be that since the Palace was owned by Sevenoaks District Council, no planning approval was required.

After much lobbying, the work was finally carried out by John Jarvis Limited of Tunbridge Wells. The firm, founded in 1883 went into insolvency in June 2013. During its existence it built many landmark buildings in Tunbridge Well such as the Opera House and the Kent and Sussex Hospital.

1. Advocacy for repairs

The campaign to persuade Sevenoaks District Council to accept its responsibility for repairs to the Tower, was led by Anthony Stoyel. Anthony was a noted local historian and co-author (with D Clarke) of the book *Otford in Kent – a history*¹. He was supported by councillors from both Otford and Sevenoaks District, as well as other organisations concerned with heritage preservation. Their names can be found in the following pages.

The following pages, indicate the strength of the campaign and the indifference to the preservation of the Tower expressed by some individuals.

¹ Clarke D & Stoyel A, (1975) *Otford in Kent, a History*. Otford & District Historical Society. ISBN 0-9503963 0 3

PH



Department of the Environment
Room 324 Fortress House 23 Savile Row London W1X 2HE

Telephone 01-734 6010 ext 445
GTN 2503

The Secretary
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
Argyle Road
SEVENOAKS
Kent
TN13 1HG

Your reference

Our reference

AA 50951/2

Date

19 February 1981

Dear Sir

OTFORD PALACE

I am writing to express the concern of the Department about the deteriorating condition of Otford Palace.

In 1977 the Department produced a fairly lengthy report on the condition of the monument and also detailed work which should be done to arrest decay and to consolidate the structure. On 8 September 1977 we wrote to the Council's Technical Services Officer stating that we were willing in principle to make a $\frac{1}{2}$ grant towards the cost of the consolidation work to the tower (exterior and interior) and to the exterior ground floor walls of the gatehouse range as specified in our report.

Although the Technical Services Officer advised us on 4 May 1978 that drawings and specifications work were in hand in his department with a view to completing the remedial work that year, it appears that it was not possible to pursue the project. Since that time various approaches had been made both orally and in writing to enquire how matters stood, and about a year ago we were led to believe that money for repairs to the Palace were included in the 1980 budget. Again, however, we have heard nothing further.

Obviously the longer the work is left the worse will become the condition of the Palace and the more expensive the cost of repair. It hardly seems necessary for the Department to stress the historic importance of the Palace, and we would hope that your Council, as a responsible Local Authority, would be able to set a good example in the proper care of the historic heritage in its charge.

As you know Mr A D Stoyel has sent to us a copy of his letter of 31 January 1981 to you, and from this I note that a Committee of the Council is to consider the matter again shortly. While we fully realise the problems created by the current financial restraints, we would nevertheless ask that your Council gives very sympathetic consideration to allocating Otford Palace a high place in its list of priorities.

I shall be grateful if you will advise me of the outcome of the Committee meeting.

I am sending a copy of this letter to your Technical Services Officer, and also to Mr Stoyel.

Yours faithfully

P A STOCKER

20th February 1981.

Will all Parish Councillors please read the enclosed letter and if at all possible telephone me between the hours of 10a.m. and noon on Sunday 22nd.

I would like at that time to know primarily if they, in principle at least, agree with Mr. Stoyal's suggestion of a 'Save the Otford Palace' Appeal, by public subscription. The reason for the urgency in this reply is that the notices for the Annual Parish Meeting which include the Agenda, have already gone to press. If the decision of the Council is in favour of this Appeal it should be included on the Agenda for discussion at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Any suggestion for a further favourable influence on the Sevenoaks District Council before the Meeting on the 26th, would be appreciated otherwise the subject can be discussed at length at the Council Meeting on the 2nd March.

Dasen.

Report of Meeting held in the Village Hall on 17th March, 1981
to discuss the urgent Repair and Preservation of Otford Palace
Tower.

Present: Mr. D. Prestage - Chairman
Mrs. J. Buck Mr. D. Rickard
Mrs. P. Matthews Mr. A.D. Stoyel
Mr. L. Metcalfe Mr. C. Ward.

The directive from the Parish Council to the Committee setting
out its terms of reference was read as follows:-

"To investigate the need for repair and preservation
of Otford Palace Tower and to formulate a programme
for the carrying out of these works and also to advise
on methods of fund raising once a measure of the expen-
diture involved is estimated and further to seek what
assistance might be provided by Sevenoaks District
Council in view of the responsibility of that Council as
the present owners of the site."

No Agenda having been prepared, the meeting proceeded to discuss
what plan of action might be followed to save the Palace Tower
from collapse following Sevenoaks District Council's neglect by
deferment of essential work over the past four years. It was
noted that despite repeated requests by Mr. A.D. Stoyel and
Otford Parish Council backed by massive support from national,
county and local bodies, the ruin had not received any major
repair since 1936.

As a first step it was considered essential to obtain a copy
of the schedule of works prepared by the department of the
Environment in 1977 seen briefly at that time by Mr. Stoyel and
any other relevant expert, up-to-date, factual information
including the make-up of the District Council's estimate totalling
£33,000. Having no mandate to employ a surveyor, Mr. Stoyel's
suggestion that the Committee avail itself of the assistance
previously volunteered on a personal basis by Mrs. Wright, Technical
Adviser to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, was
welcomed: her unofficial survey could then be used to obtain inde-
pendent estimates. Mr. Stoyel questioned whether quotations
should be sought by the District Council rather than the Committee.
The Chairman considered it unwise to expect much of the District
Council due to the economic situation's tightening of local
authority financial resources and lack of both real knowledge and
interest on its part. It was agreed that recent rapid deter-
ioration signified the need for a fresh appraisal of the present
state of the building bearing in mind that the District Council
were quite unmoved by the imminent disintegration of the Palace
Tower being intent only on the avoidance of expense. In the
connection the liability of the District Council in the event of
damage or injury if the Tower or parts of it fell down was raised
and it was decided to consult Councillor Lythaby, Chairman of Otford
Parish Council, in his capacity as Council Solicitor.

Undoubtedly, the proper care of the Palace could best be assured
if it were taken into the guardianship of the Department of the
Environment, in which case the District Council should make a cash
contribution to balance the offloading of its neglected responsi-
bility as present owner. It was decided to enquire whether the
Department of the Environment could carry out the urgent repairs
now necessary in the knowledge that the D. of E. had previously

continued/...

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL AFTER THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 28th September 1978

REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL SERVICES OFFICER

THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, OTFORD

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The standing buildings of the Palace have been considered as three separate entities for administrative purposes. They are -

- (a) The Store Building (formerly part of an entrance gateway) at present let to the Girl Guides Association on a lease commencing in 1975 for a 5 year period at £10 per annum. This lease includes a clause which excludes structural repairs.
- (b) Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Castle Cottages were originally a cloister range connecting (a) to (c) which was overbuilt and now provides 3 dwelling units.
- (c) A group of 3 towers.

Visually, physically and practically however, they are all part of one building, parts (a) and (c) being under the control of the Amenities Committee and part (b) being under the control of the Housing Committee.

1.2 Of these items, the Store Building and Castle Cottages are Listed Buildings and the Store Building and the three towers are scheduled as Ancient Monuments. The reason that Castle Cottages are not scheduled as an Ancient Monument is that they are occupied as dwellings by persons other than a recognised caretaker and are thereby precluded from being scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Acts 1913 - 1953.

1.3 All the buildings are in need of repair and currently proposals are under consideration by the respective committees for repairs and improvement works to the cottages and repairs and renovation works to the towers.

1.4 Difficulties have been encountered in progressing both these schemes, through public opposition to some of the proposals affecting the external Tudor fabric although no objection has been made in respect of the repair work as such.

2.0 Current Situation

2.1 Enquiries have confirmed that a grant specifically for works of repair might still be obtainable from the Department of the Environment in the current financial year if prompt application is made. There is some doubt whether monies can be obtained from Kent County funds this year for this purpose.

Exchequer Grants

The Secretary of State for the Environment has power to make grants for the repair or maintenance of buildings that are of outstanding architectural or historic interest. Comparatively few of the listed buildings in the country qualify as 'outstanding' and so the scope for these grants is limited. Usually only Grade I buildings qualify, Grade II* occasionally but Grade II only exceptionally. There is no fixed rate, but it is normally up to 50% of approved works.

X The Secretary, The Historic Buildings Council, Department of the Environment, 25 Savile Row, London W1X 2BT.
The Secretary, The Historic Buildings Council for Wales, Welsh Office, Summit House, Windsor Place, Cardiff.

Local Authority Grants

Local authorities have wider scope. They may make grants for any building of architectural or historic interest and are not restricted to outstanding buildings or even to listed buildings. Grants may be made by county and district councils (in London by the Greater London Council and the London borough council). Applicants should contact each Council as grants may be forthcoming from both sources.

House improvement grants may also be available for improving or converting a listed building which is to be used as a dwelling. For further details contact the local authority.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund

An independent body set up by the National Heritage Act 1980 in succession to the National Land Fund. It is empowered to assist, through grants or loans, the preservation, maintenance and acquisition of buildings, land, works of art and other objects or structures of outstanding importance to the national heritage. The eligible recipients for assistance from the fund are non-profit-making institutions in the arts, libraries and land and building worlds, or any other non-profit-making body whose main objective lies in the conservation of the national heritage. Assistance will normally be conditional on the general public being allowed access to whatever is being acquired or preserved.

X The Trustees will give assistance only where there is no other source of funds for a project, or when the scale of the project is such that 'topping up' is essential. Owners of national heritage property may be able to obtain tax concessions on the sale of such property by private treaty to a national museum or gallery, the National Trust, or any other body listed in Schedule 6, paragraph 12 of the Finance Act 1975.

Further information from: The Secretary, National Heritage Memorial Fund, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BL. Tel: 01-212 5414

The Architectural Heritage Fund

? | The Civic Trust administers a fund in which money is loaned at low interest rates for a period of not more than two years, to help local building preservation trusts and charitable bodies to buy, restore and resell buildings which merit conservation. Conditions may be attached to these loans. This loan may be combined with grant aid from the Historic Buildings Council and/or local authorities.

Loans can be up to 50% of the cost of the work. The repayment is geared to the reselling price.

Further information from the Architectural Heritage Fund, Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AW.

Charitable Trusts and Foundations

✓ Grants are sometimes available from charitable trusts and foundations for the maintenance and repair of buildings of architectural and historic interest that are opened to the public, also for buildings that are not privately owned. Details may be obtained from the Charities Aid Foundation's "Directory of Grant-Making Trusts" (26 Bedford Sq. London WC1) which can be found in most reference libraries. Funds are limited in most cases. Local authorities may also have a list of local charities. Local amenity societies should be contacted for advice and possibly financial help.

Examples of charitable trusts and foundations are as follows:

Declined

The Landmark Trust, 21 Deans Yard, London SW1. Buildings of unusual design or former use are restored and made available as holiday homes. Funds are usually for the purchase of the buildings only by the Trust.

X

The Pilgrim Trust, 10 Great College Street, London SW1. These grants are for the preservation of buildings and their contents if they are of outstanding interest.

X

The Chase Charity, 77 Gloucester Road, London SW7. For the preservation of buildings of historic interest and beauty and their contents. The funds are for small projects held on charitable trust.

No —

The Leche Trust, Gaitmore Investments Ltd, Gayzer House, 2 St. Mary Avenue, London EC3A 8EP. Grants are made for the preservation of buildings of the Georgian period 1680-1830 if they are of outstanding architectural or historical interest.

The Carnegie U.K. Trust. Applications to the Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AW. To enable amenity societies to produce guides, films, exhibitions etc. on the history, character and resources of an area.

The Dulverton Trust, 30A St. James's Sq. London SW1Y 4JH, for conservation schemes. Mainly West Country and Bristol.

X

Manifold Charitable Trust, 21 Deans Yard, London SW1P 3JA.

X

T.B.H. Brunner's Charitable Trust. 24 Bedford Gardens, London W8. Very small.

X

Mitchell Trust, Murray Lodge, Barton's Lane, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks HP8 4BL

Funds from Manufacturers

E.g. Dulux Community Projects scheme. ICI may sponsor painting projects for voluntary groups, registered charities, schools, clubs etc. for various projects including listed buildings.

X

It is often worth approaching local manufacturers for help.

The Manpower Services Commission's schemes to help unemployment. The Youth Opportunities Programme and the Special Temporary Employment Programme.

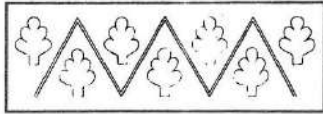
Labour may be provided for conservation projects in certain towns or areas.

Details from the Commission at 166 High Holborn, London WC1

The Science Museum

The Science Museum Preservation Fund, South Kensington London SW7 2DD provides financial help to local museums to preserve technological material.

SEVENOAKS



DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, ARGYLE ROAD,

SEVENOAKS, KENT. TN13. 1HG.

SECRETARY D.C. ORGLES LL.B.

Mrs. D.A. Wright,
Clerk to the Council,
Otford Parish Council,
Little Pilgrims,
2 Pilgrims Way East,
Otford,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

TEL: SEVENOAKS 59711

EXT: 260

ASK FOR: Mr. Orgles

MY REF: DCO/DC

YR REF:

DATE: 26th January 1981

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Otford Palace

In reply to your letter of the 21st January, the Council at its meeting on the 22nd January approved the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee that, with the exception of the Edenbridge Sports Hall, all other new capital projects be reviewed at the next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee which is to be held on the 26th February.

I am putting your suggestion that the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee and the Chairman of the Amenities Committee might like to inspect Otford Palace before that meeting is held to them and will write to you again on that point in due course.

Until now, there has been no precise definition as to what is capital expenditure and what is revenue expenditure. A local authority was free to decide that it would meet any particular expenditure out of its capital reserves or out of revenue as it wished whatever the amount, although in broad terms large "one-off" amounts were usually regarded as capital rather than revenue items, particularly if the expenditure related to some particular acquisition of land, plant, vehicles or buildings. In other words, it was the method of financing the expenditure rather than the nature of the expenditure which determined whether it was capital or revenue.

Since the passing of the Local Government (Planning & Land) Act 1980, the position is now governed by statute, in that Part VIII of that Act, which is headed "Capital Expenditure of Local Authorities" applies certain controls to the expenditure of certain amounts, as set out in Schedule 12 to the Act, and such expenditure is "prescribed expenditure". It would seem to me that expenditure of the order proposed on Otford Palace would bring it within those provisions.

Yours sincerely,


Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

APPENDIX A (contd.)

and without causing too much damage to the stonework the parging be removed. If the stonework exposed underneath is found to be in poor condition making the window structurally unsafe then the following is recommended:

- Blocked up*
- a) the window openings are ~~blocked~~ and rendered both sides to match Nos. 5 windows already blocked off, or
 - b) renew unsafe stonework with new stone to match existing.

Finally, one of the problems with this building, as with all monuments without roofs etc., is the nuisance and mess caused by pigeons to the interior of the building. This could be easily overcome by fixing metal wire grilles on wooden frames to all unblocked openings and by erecting a pigeonproof netting across the opening at wall top level attached to a metal frame fixed around the wall top (as Rochester Castle).

REMEDIAL WORK REQUIRED:

EXTERNAL

1. All elevations to tower, forebuilding and SE turret.
 - a) Erect scaffold, remove all vegetation, cut out all perished joints in brick and stonework, approx. 4 sq. metres to each elevation, grout and tamp all voids and repoint joints with a mortar to match original. (Samples of mortar to be made up for approval before work commences).
 - b) Remove badly spalled bricks and replace with matching bricks, approx. 30 bricks to each elevation.
 - c) Remove carefully all loose and cracked rendering to stonework to windows and expose stonework underneath, investigate the condition of the stonework especially the mullions, if found unsafe either renew with new stone or block up the window openings as recommended.
 - d) Scale off all friable stone from quoins, windows, doorways and string courses.
 - e) Remove top 4 courses of brickwork at wall top level, clean off and rebuild. Lay a DPC on top of brickwork and render over to form a capping. (Mortar mix to be approved).
 - f) Fit to all unblocked windows and doors pigeonproof wire grilles fixed on treated wooden frames.
 - g) Treat metal gates and window bars by wire-brushing and applying 2 to 3 coats of rustproof paint.
 - h) Fit pigeonproof netting over all openings at wall top level fixed on to a metal frame (galv/tube, copper or similar) around the wall tops.
 - i) Remove sapling and accumulated spoil away from the base of the wall on the E elevation.

Estimated cost	...	£6,000.00
Provisional sum for renewing stonework	...	£2,000.00

APPENDIX A

REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

OTFORD PALACE

DESCRIPTION

Reptagonal A.D.S.

The main structure is octagonal in shape, measuring 11.5 m in height, with a rectangular shaped forebuilding built into the S elevation of the tower measuring 3.5 m in length, 2.5 m in depth. The forebuilding contains Nos. 3 vertical brick built shafts thought to be guarderobe shafts serving each floor. Built onto the SE corner of the main structure is an octagonal shaped turret in which there still exists the remains of a spiral staircase. Attached to the outer S wall of the turret is one of a group of terraced cottages of which the lower half of the turret acts as the NW corner of the first cottage (photo 1).

The interior of the tower originally consisted of ground, first and second floors with roof above, none of which now exist, but still in evidence at each floor level are Nos. 3 stone fireplaces and surrounds, built into the NW wall.

CONSTRUCTION

Random stone rubble walling up to first plinth course approx. 1.3 m from ground level. From first plinth course to wall top the construction is coursed brick infill between stone ashlar quoins and stone mullioned windows and surrounds. The windows exist on all elevations at each floor level, with the exception of turret and forebuilding. Entrance into the tower is through the S elevation doorway (photo 2). This entrance is now fitted with a metal gate. Some of the windows have open metal grilles fitted.

OBSERVATIONS

The building appears to be structurally in reasonable condition, with no visible signs of any movement i.e. subsidence etc. The fabric has no serious defects except those caused by natural erosion of stone and brickwork by the elements, although it was noted that the interior walls have suffered more through erosion than the exterior walls. The wall tops on inspection were found to be capped off with a very dense sand/cement mortar acting as a watershed. The mortar has cracked allowing water penetration and sooner or later the whole of the wall tops will have to be redone. Also noted was that the top 4 courses of brickwork around the wall tops are in a loose condition. In view of this and the cracked mortar it is recommended that the 4 courses of brickwork be removed and rebuilt and before capping off the wall tops with a more compatible mortar, a DPC to give additional weatherproofing should be laid around the wall tops on top of the brickwork.

In the 30s attempts were made to prevent further erosion of some of the stonework to window heads, jambs, cills and mullions by parging over with sand/cement mortar, unfortunately, again the mortar was very dense and is now either cracked badly or in a state of falling off doing more harm than good to the stonework underneath. Recommend that where possible

APPENDIX A (contd.)

INTERNAL

2. All elevations to tower, forebuilding and SE tower.

- a) Erect scaffold, remove all vegetation, cut out loose joints and treat as la approx. 3 sq. metres to each elevation. Remove badly spalled bricks, treat as lb approx. 40 bricks to each elevation.
- b) Inspect and treat existing timber lintols and studding, if the lintols are rotten remove and insert reinforced concrete lintols. *Handwritten: This must mean the plates. A.S.*
- c) Second floor south elevation doorway entrance to guarderobe pits, top and bottom stone to left-hand jamb to be renewed with matching stone. *Handwritten: Already used for many of the lintols. A.S.*
- d) Second floor doorway entrance east elevation of tower, left-hand jamb, pick up brickwork approx. 18" from middle section and corbel out to face of lintol over.
- e) Nos. 1 and 2 shafts to guarderobes situated in forebuilding, make good brickwork between shaft wall and intersection of exterior wall, approx. 100 bricks.
- f) Brush off friable substances from brick and stonework.
- g) Remove all accumulated bird droppings, rubbish and earth.

Estimated cost ... £4,500.00

Total estimated cost for preservation and consolidation work based on present day costs for wages and materials, work to be carried out by a locally based contractor.

Total cost	...	£10,500.00
Provisional sum for renewing stonework	...	£ 2,000.00

Sevenoaks District Architectural History
a regional study of early vernacular buildings

The Clerk
Otford Parish Council
Little Pilgrims
2 Pilgrims Way East
Otford

URGENT

from
ANTHONY D. STOYEL

52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

telephone OTFORD (09592) 3579
19th February 1981

Dear Mrs Wright,

OTFORD PALACE

Two aspects of this matter now trouble me deeply.

Firstly, I have been told by more than one Sevenoaks District Councillor that, if the Policy & Resources Committee decide at their meeting next Thursday (26th February) against allocating funds for repairs, the matter will be shelved for another whole year. I believe that we in Otford are all agreed that this simply must not be allowed to happen. Yet how on earth are we going to prevent it? Mrs Medhurst tells me that her fellow-Councillors are utterly impervious to bad Press and other publicity; I fear that she is right and that what is virtually our only weapon will be of no avail. At the site meeting last Tuesday, the Chairman of the Amenities Committee, after inspecting the tower, remarked to me that she did not consider four years a long time to have deferred repairs; I mention this to illustrate the sort of attitude we are up against. Naturally I immediately made it very plain to her that, whilst it might not be a long time with a relatively modern building, it was three years too long in the case of a roofless Ancient Monument which had, at the beginning of 1977, already been pronounced by the Department of the Environment as being in need of repair; she seemed at the time to accept this, but how much the point will influence the Policy & Resources Committee is an altogether different matter.

Secondly, we have to face the fact that the present District Councillors have inherited a situation resulting from the sins of their predecessors. No matter how successful we may have been in convincing the three representatives who attended the site meeting of the desperate need for immediate action, if they lack the necessary financial resources, they are powerless to do anything about it, however much they may want to and however well they appreciate that delay will inevitably increase the ultimate cost - probably quite dramatically. The decay in the tower has very likely spread so much by now behind the visible brickwork that it may well be unrealistic to suppose that it can be arrested effectively by only minimal repairs. This is something that can be established only by technical specialists, but meanwhile, it seems to me that we must recognize the possibility that nothing short of expenditure of the whole estimated £33,000-odd will now save the tower from collapse and that, even with aid (grants from the DoE and KCC were expected in 1977), the SDC will decide that they simply cannot afford it.

At yesterday's meeting of Otford & District Historical Society, I made brief reference to the situation in the course of my lecture. Mr Anthony Branson, who I believe is still on Sevenoaks Town Council and Chairman of Sevenoaks District Arts Council but is not on the SDC, was present and at question-time he made a statement to the meeting. This was to the effect that his own experience had shown that the SDC are very much more inclined to incur expenditure on schemes of this kind where parish councils themselves undertake to pay a contribution, viz. if local feeling is strong enough to be backed by definite evidence of willingness to participate in achieving the desired aim. I replied merely that I took his point and would inform Otford Parish Council.

It can, of course, be argued that the tower belongs to the SDC, that it is their responsibility to maintain it, and that they have brought the present situation upon themselves by failing to do so at the proper time. All this is perfectly true and, indeed, forms the basis of the case we have already made. But in view of the very real possibility, as matters stand, of our case being rejected next Thursday on grounds of financial inability, I feel that Mr Branson's suggestion deserves urgent consideration.

The situation now is surely comparable to an ancient cathedral or fine church which the ecclesiastical authorities could not possibly maintain without public contributions. If I were not so heavily over-committed already, I would personally establish a 'Save Otford Palace' appeal, but - with the best will in the world - I cannot undertake the organization of such a project. I therefore pass on the suggestion that an appeal fund be set up under the aegis of your Council and that, if possible, the SDC are informed of it before next Thursday's meeting. I would gladly offer £100 immediately, which could go some way towards publicizing the appeal, and I should of course be pleased to co-operate with your Council in any other way I can. With this week's centre-spread in the 'Sevenoaks News' and the promise of a similar feature in the coming issue of the 'Sevenoaks Chronicle', what better time than now to ride on the crest of the wave of Press publicity? I feel reasonably confident that a well-expressed appeal would win a significant measure of support, besides convincing the SDC of local unity of purpose in being willing to identify ourselves with the achievement of the objective and in standing no more nonsense about repairs being delayed any longer.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Lloyd

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS OF SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Dear Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the six organizations named at the end of this letter to express our grave disquiet upon hearing the outcome regarding Otford Palace of the meeting of your Policy & Resources Committee on 26 February. The centre-spread publicity in the Sevenoaks News (18.2.81) and Sevenoaks Chronicle (21.2.81) has already emphasized the degree of widespread public concern over your Council's failure to put in hand the long-awaited repairs to the tower, now urgently needed to save it from collapse. Remember that what is under discussion is a much-visited survival from England's greatest house of its day, with Tudor features of exceptionally rare quality.

Whilst all members of your Committee received copies of my letter dated 31.1.81, this was not the case with letters from the Department of the Environment, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Ancient Monuments Society, Kent Historic Buildings Committee (jointly representing Kent Archaeological Society and Kent Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England), Otford Parish Council, Otford & District Historical Society, and The Otford Society. All of these letters were, and still remain, worthy of your attention, but none more so than that from the Department of the Environment. Upon discovering that copies of this were not with the agenda-papers, Otford's representative Councillor A. Palmer very rightly read parts of it out to the meeting. Because of its importance, we now quote it in full as an annexure to this letter.

The meeting resolved to invite the Department of the Environment to take the Palace into their care. What was apparently overlooked, however, was that a similar resolution of your Planning & Transportation Committee (11.7.78) has already met with refusal by the Department. In view of your Council's past record of lack of care for this important Ancient Monument, I have since then repeatedly pressed the Department to take it into guardianship as the best possible solution, but the final decision in their letter to me dated 25.1.80 was that 'in the current financial climate the Department is virtually unable to take on additional commitments'. Clearly, therefore, your Committee's latest resolution stands no chance of success.

I need hardly repeat how well we understand your ~~FINANCIAL~~ financial predicament, but the fact remains that it has largely been brought upon yourselves by inaction which is altogether beyond our comprehension. Had you proceeded with the repairs as proposed at your meeting on 17.2.77 and resolved by your Amenities Committee on 15.9.77, the job would have been completed at a fraction of the current cost. A similar resolution of your full Council on 24.7.80 still awaits implementation.

We cannot urge you too strongly to ensure that expenditure on at least the most desperately needed repairs is authorized at your forthcoming full meeting on 12 March. In the absence of definite indication that your Council, as owners, are allocating funds for the work, how do you expect Otford to promote its proposed public appeal to supplement those funds with the success we have good reason to anticipate?

Yours faithfully,



ANTHONY D. STOYEL

On behalf of:-

Kent Archaeological Society & Kent Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (jointly represented by the Kent Historic Buildings Committee); Sevenoaks District Architectural History; Otford Parish Council; Otford & District Historical Society; and The Otford Society.

1981

LETTER DATED 19 FEBRUARY/FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

(Submitted for publication to the Sevenoaks Chronicle).

COPY

Sevenoaks District Architectural History
a regional study of early vernacular buildings

The Secretary
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
55 Great Ormond Street
LONDON WC1N 3JA

from
ANTHONY D. STOYEL

52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

telephone OTFORD (09592) 3579

Your ref. DP/AN

14th March 1981

Dear Mr Pearce,

OTFORD PALACE

Thank you for your letter of 5th February enclosing a copy of one you sent to Sevenoaks District Council. As forecast in my letter to you dated 31st January, this matter came up yet again at a Council Committee meeting on 26th February. Copies of your letter were not circulated to members beforehand nor placed with the agenda-papers, so that the Committee were not even told by the Council's officers that you had written, let alone what you had said. The same was true of letters from six other bodies supporting our views. This, I regret to say, is typical of the officers' failure to brief members properly for intelligent preparation and discussion.

In the event, that meeting did not have any satisfactory outcome. I thereupon wrote an 'open letter' (copy enclosed) which was sent to every member of the Council and was publicised in the local Press, prior to the full District Council meeting held on 12th March. The results of the latter meeting may be summarized as follows:-

- (a) The Council's officers are to investigate the possibility of the Palace tower being taken over by the Department of the Environment or any other appropriate body.
- (b) If these negotiations are not successful within 6 months, tenders are then to be sought from approved contractors to carry out only essential repairs to the tower, the tenders to be reported to the Council.
- (c) If any repairs are undertaken, Otford Parish Council are to contribute one-fifth of the cost.

These decisions strike me as reflecting an extraordinarily unrealistic attitude. They were made in the knowledge that the DoE is virtually certain to be unable to take over the tower however much the Department may wish to, and that neither this nor any other 'appropriate body' is scarcely likely even to consider accepting it in its present condition. It would have been more understandable if the Council had agreed to carry out the essential repairs forthwith and then try to find a body willing to undertake guardianship. As it is, the decisions amount in realistic terms to yet another deferment of first-aid work with no guarantee that it will be done after the 6 months have expired - as the Council's record of repeated deferments since 1977 has eloquently demonstrated. Moreover, if the repairs (estimated an unknown time ago at over £33,000) are not carried out quickly, there is a very real danger that the top storey of the tower will collapse; after 6 months, therefore, far more drastic reconstruction in addition to repairs could easily be required at vastly greater cost, one-fifth

of which would probably be well beyond the resources of Otford Parish Council despite their present intention to launch a local public appeal this month. Another unsatisfactory aspect is that, since the tower forms part of a single range of Tudor Palace remains (another adjacent part being occupied as three terraced Council dwellings), there could be inherent dangers in the range being split between different owners unless, of course, the DoE themselves can be persuaded to take over the tower.

The historic importance of the Palace site as a whole, and the architectural value of the surviving remains, are not generally appreciated and I feel that I should give you the following information:-

- (1) During the last year or two I have carried out a great deal of new research on this Palace, working principally from C13-16 primary sources but naturally taking into consideration all available architectural and archaeological evidence, parallels elsewhere, and so on. The results now amount to a mass of important and hitherto unpublished material. I have this week been asked by Kent University to write an account of Otford Palace based on this material, for inclusion in a book (on the Canterbury archiepiscopal palaces from Lanfranc to Laud) to be published probably by Kent Archaeological Society towards the end of this year. I think that there is also a need for a comparatively simple booklet for the ordinary visitor and general reader.
- (2) As no accurate detailed plan of the Palace has ever been produced, I last year commissioned a professional survey of the entire site, which has now enabled me to plot a draft scale plan of the complex as finally enlarged and mostly rebuilt by Archbishop Warham in 1514-18. This plan will be reproduced in the forthcoming book and in the other publication I have in mind.
- (3) The new plan has made it possible, for the first time, to measure the overall dimensions of the Palace, excluding farm buildings and other outlying appurtenances: they were 600 ft. by 370 ft. Pevsner (Buildings of England: Middlesex, 67) described Wolsey's Hampton Court of the 1520s as 'the grandest of all houses built in England at the time, at least 300 by 550 feet in size'. Thus it now appears that this accolade should rightfully be transferred to Warham's slightly-earlier Otford Palace. Its Great Hall, too, was appreciably larger than Wolsey's at Hampton Court, which even after Henry VIII's 1536 rebuilding still did not equal Otford's in size.
- (4) So far as I can discover, Otford was England's first house to incorporate the long narrow, corridor-type, galleries which were copied later at such palaces as Hampton Court (if you happen to know of any earlier example, I shall be only too pleased to hear of it). At Otford the longest were 304 ft. and 228 ft., both only 11 ft. wide, of two storeys with the lower treated as a cloister. The surviving relatively-short length of gallery (now adapted as dwellings, Castle Cottages) displays a splendid range of

blocked cloister-openings in high-quality moulded brickwork of c.1515, which I regard as the earliest thing of its kind in England; there are very few parallels, the closest perhaps being the President's Gallery (1540) at Queen's College, Cambridge, which still has the timber-framed superstructure that Otford's originally had.

These are factors which, to my mind, make the preservation of what remains of Otford Palace a matter of national importance, yet wellnigh impossible to get across effectively to a body of largely-philistine laymen such as Sevenoaks District Council.

My campaign to persuade the Council to do their duty as owners of the monument has now been going on for nearly 4 years and has received massive support from national, county and local bodies. The Council's latest decisions represent poor recompense for all this work and my own feeling is that we have now gone as far as we can by way of direct endeavour. It seems to me that, so long as the owners themselves maintain refusal to allot even a nucleus fund to be supplemented by grants and donations, the standing and success of Otford Parish Council's special committee - now poised to launch its public appeal - is placed in serious jeopardy.

If you have any suggestions, I shall be very glad to hear of them. I would, however, earnestly request that your Society now considers using its powerful influence either to exert stronger pressure on the Council or, better still, to persuade the DoE to do so or else take the Palace (or at least its one surviving tower) into their guardianship.

I shall be obliged if you will let me have your observations in due course.

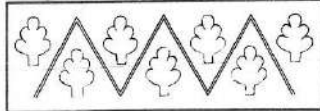
Yours sincerely,

A.D.S.

Director of Studies

(I am writing in basically-similar terms to the DoE,
Ancient Monuments Society, & Kent Historic Buildings
Committee.)
ADS

SEVENOAKS



DISTRICT COUNCIL

TECHNICAL SERVICES OFFICER
ALAN T. BENNETT C.Eng., M.I.C.E., F.I.Mun.E.,
F.Inst. H.E., F.B.I.M.

"INGLEWOOD",
OAK HILL ROAD,
SEVENOAKS,
KENT. TN13 1NR.

TELEPHONE: SEVENOAKS 56181
EXTENSION: 265
ASK FOR: Mr. A.T. Bennett
MY REF: ATB/DWA/SJW AJ35/1
YOUR REF:

DATE: 17th March, 1981.

Mrs. D.A. Wright,
Clerk to the Council,
Otford Parish Council,
2 Pilgrims Way East,
Otford,
Sevenoaks,
Kent, TN14 5QN.

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Archbishops Palace, Otford

In response to your recent telephone enquiry, I confirm that on the 15th February 1977 the Department of the Environment suggested the following restoration works:-

Short Term Programme

1. Consolidation of the brickwork of the wall tops.
2. Treatment of stone window surrounds, mullions and cills.
3. Re-pointing of areas of brickwork below windows.
4. Treatment of long and short stone quoins and stone string courses as necessary.
5. Rust proofing and re-painting ironwork.
6. Renewal of timber lintels with pre-stressed concrete.
7. Removal of all vegetation.

Long Term Programme

1. Provide roofing at highest level possible.
2. Seal all existing openings.

I do trust this is of help to you.

Yours sincerely,

PR Technical Services Officer

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE TECHNICAL SERVICES OFFICER QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE.

*Full Report + Schedule
of Work.
April 77.*

refused to do so on the grounds (a) that the District Council would do so and (b) forbidding financial restrictions placed on the Department of the Environment. Mr. Stoyel here reminded members that he was awaiting replies to his requests to the Department of the Environment, The Ancient Monuments Society and Kent Historic Buildings Committee to influence the District Council to meet its liabilities in preserving the Palace Tower or to get the D. of E. to take the surviving Tower into its guardianship.

The amazing escalation of the District Council's estimate of cost of repair from £9,000. to £53,000 was discussed and the possibility of obtaining via our District Councillors the details of the last estimate, together with some of the problems which its worsening condition had imposed e.g. massive scaffolding requirements outside and a cage-like structure inside and the need for specialist supervision. The work might be attractive to specialist restoration builders who might then be more amenable to furnishing a quotation.

Consideration was given to the launching of an appeal. Mr. Ward had discussed this possibility with several people and felt assured that an appeal for the Restoration of the Palace Tower would meet with sympathetic consideration and a favourable response from the public and from such bodies as Kent Archaeological Society who might contribute as much as £2,000., and also KCC. There were many other sources and a list of such sources obtainable from the library would be photostated and passed to Mrs. Wright for selection. It was felt that any fund raising must be in the hands of one organisation. The launching of an Appeal it was thought might even bring some action from Sevenoaks District Council if it were thus convinced of the very real interest in the restoration of the Palace.

Presupposing the success of an Appeal and the satisfactory restoration of the Palace Tower, the Chairman enquired whether the D. of the E. gave running grants to deal with future repairs as and when required? This possibility would be investigated and also whether the District Council would then be prepared to examine and patch every other year as the Rural District Council had done.

The Chairman then broached the possibility of bringing the Tower into use. Mr. Stoyel said this was quite possible in theory but not without losing a considerable amount of its interest as except for the floors it had remained unchanged since Tudor times. It was agreed to consider bringing the upper floors into ~~commercial~~ use and to use the ground floor as a museum for the local Historical and Archaeological Societies as a means of ensuring the future preservation of the Tower fabric.

The next meeting would be held in the Village Hall Committee Room on 12th May, 1981 at 8.00 p.m.

Mr D. Prestage

Copy for your information.

27th March 1981

52 Tudor Drive
Otford

TO

Otford Parish Council
Otford & District Historical Society
The Otford Society

OTFORD PALACE

I enclose a copy of my letter dated 23.3.81 to Sevenoaks District Council.

From their recent discussions, it is now abundantly clear that the majority of District Councillors are intent only on ridding themselves of the tower as quickly as possible in the hope of avoiding altogether the need to spend money on it. I very much fear that all they will do about the dangerous parapet may be to attempt to dismantle it as an emergency precaution against injury to third parties, and simply leave it at that. The DoE might intervene to prevent such tampering with a scheduled Ancient Monument, but I do not know the exact extent of their statutory powers in circumstances such as these.

I have sent copies of my letter to the DoE, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and the Ancient Monuments Society. I have urged the DoE to reconsider the whole situation with a view to accepting guardianship of at least the tower if they possibly can, and I have asked the other 2 bodies (whose influence is powerful) to press the DoE to do this. Copies for information have also gone to the Kent Historic Buildings Committee, the Sevenoaks Chronicle, Otford's SDC Representatives, and all members of the Otford Palace Appeal Committee.

I have written this letter as a 'last ditch' effort to persuade SDC to adopt a more responsible attitude, but am not optimistic that it will make any impression whatsoever. Since it asks them to reconsider their 12.3.81 resolution, I think that the more support it receives the better, however remote the chances of success. I realize that at least one part of the letter, by its very nature, does not lend itself to support, but its impact as a whole might conceivably be greater if you could write a back-up letter with special reference to items (2) & (3), though carefully avoiding any possible implication that you dissociate yourselves with the remainder. I would suggest too that you might urge District Councillors, instead of making destructive criticisms of the kind recently publicized, to give Otford some encouragement by taking positive action to allocate funds for the essential repairs without further delay. Meanwhile, we are in the absurd position of having to appeal for public support for a fund which the tower's owners have not even seen fit to bring into existence.

Since 7 letters to SDC before their meeting on 26.2.81 were suppressed by their Officers, I think that henceforth every letter should ask specifically that its contents be brought to the notice of all Councillors.

There are no more than my personal suggestions and, to ensure the best possible united approach from local bodies, I feel that some liaison with Mr David Prestage is desirable before any letter is sent.

(P.T.O.)

~~The Oxford Society
Oxford & District
Oxford Parish Council~~

I enclose a copy of my letter dated 21.3.51 to Government of Madras, Bombay.

Yours sincerely,

The only other member of Appeal Committee receiving a copy of this covering note is Mrs Martin, Secretary.

All members have copies of the letter dated 23.3.81 to SDC.

1. The above information was obtained from a confidential source who has provided reliable information in the past. The source has provided this information for your information only and is not to be disseminated outside your agency.

On 12/1/68, I think that somewhere every letter should not specifically state the
 extent to be brought to the notice of all Government.

There are no more than 40 personal suggestions and, to ensure the best possible
 United approach from local bodies, I feel that some liaison with the District
 at desirable before my letter is sent.

$$\{40, 2, 3\}$$

Sevenoaks District Architectural History
a regional study of early vernacular buildings

The Secretary
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN13 1HG

Your ref. OS.2/DCO/DC

from
ANTHONY D. STOYEL

52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

telephone OTFORD (09592) 3579

23rd March 1981

Dear Mr Orgles,

OTFORD PALACE

In reply to your letter of 16th March, there are certain aspects of the District Council's resolution at their meeting on 12.3.81 on which I wish to comment and I shall be obliged if you will bring the following to the notice of all Councillors as quickly as possible.

(1) The Immediate Situation

Inspection of the Palace tower this week-end revealed that the parapet has developed an outward lean that was not apparent a month ago, clearly due to the almost complete absence of mortar in the brickwork and stone quoins, especially of the internal walling. At the moment, the lean is confined to the NW side overlooking the much-used public footpath crossing Palace Field, but the decay is practically as bad on the other sides. Partial collapse at least of the upper storey must now be regarded as imminent, and virtually certain to occur unless emergency remedial measures are taken without delay. Consequently, immediate steps are required to safeguard passers-by and the occupants of the adjoining cottage. I need hardly mention the heavy liabilities which could devolve on the Council in the event of personal injuries and damage to property as a result of the authority's negligence.

(2) The Council's Responsibility

When the former Sevenoaks Rural District Council purchased the greater part of the Palace site and remains in 1935, it was with the declared intention of securing their preservation for all time. That authority immediately carried out a major restoration of the tower, and no large-scale repairs have been required since; however, as a matter of course and without being asked, it thereafter maintained the structure regularly (at intervals of not more than about 5 years) by minor 'stitch in time' work at negligible cost. Thus from 1935 to 1974 the Palace was kept in good condition by its owners, very much on the lines I mentioned in my letter of 31.1.81 (page 2) as fundamentally essential for ancient buildings, especially where roofless.

When responsibility passed from the RDC to the new District Council in 1974, this maintenance unaccountably ceased. Instead of getting on with the job as before, the Council have simply discussed it for the past 4 years. The inevitable result is that the need for restoration has grown from a minor one in February 1977 to a major one now.

Hitherto there has never been any question of the Council's responsibility being shared by Otford. Few local people were even aware of the desperate need for repairs, partly because access to the tower has been denied: the Council changed the lock some time ago without providing the Parish Council with new keys until last month. Public consciousness of the seriousness of the position did not, therefore, even begin to become widespread until the recent Press publicity; as this started barely 3 weeks before your 12.3.81 meeting, remarks quoted from the discussion suggesting that there was no strong local support were unfairly premature. Moreover: such comments, made just after receipt of my 'open letter' written on behalf of 6 local and neighbourhood organizations and mentioning Otford's forthcoming public appeal, were patently unjustified and paid no regard to the Parish Council's prompt initiative in proposing to help the District Council to fulfil its responsibility in the present difficult circumstances.

(3) District Council's Resolution on 12.3.81

We would certainly favour the Department of the Environment taking over the tower, or better still the whole range of Palace buildings if not the entire site in SDC ownership, if they can be persuaded to do so. In the case of 'any other appropriate body', however, we feel that very considerable circumspection would need to be exercised in order to safeguard, in a responsible manner, the long-term future of the Palace as a single entity. The Tudor structure consists of:-

- (a) The NW corner-tower, 3 storeys high.
- (b) The ground-storey walls of Castle Cottages, originally a long gallery of 2 storeys.
- (c) The gatehouse, a single storey of one of its former twin 3-storey towers.

All these constitute a continuous range of buildings and, for obvious reasons, it would not be in the best interests of the Palace if they were to be split between different owners, other than the Council and the DoE.

We find it hard to believe that Councillors can honestly expect the DoE or any other 'appropriate body' even to consider accepting the NW corner-tower in its present condition. Consequently we see this resolution as yet another deferment of first-aid work, with no guarantee that it will be done after the prescribed 6 months have expired - any more than it was following the Council's previous resolutions to put the repairs out to tender.

As events have now demonstrated, 6 months is in any case much too long to delay this work. If disintegration is allowed to begin, far more drastic reconstruction as well as repairs will be necessary at vastly increased cost. We suggest that a more realistic approach would have been to agree to carry out essential work forthwith and then to try to find a body willing to undertake guardianship. We ask the Council to reconsider their resolution with a view to adopting this course with the urgency that circumstances now demand.

Bearing in mind the District Council's responsibility for the present situation, we further suggest that it is grossly unfair to make the resolution conditional on Otford Parish Council bearing one-fifth of the total expense. Until District Councillors have before them an up-to-date estimate of the cost of immediately-essential repairs, how can they judge whether what they are asking is reasonable or not? Believe me, the Palace is sufficiently dear to Otford for the parish to be relied upon to do its utmost to raise the maximum possible contribution without being tied to some arbitrary percentage.

Attention has been focussed on first-aid repairs to the tower because of its now-dangerous condition, but it should not be overlooked that the specification prepared by the DoE in 1977 details other works, including gatehouse repairs, which have likewise become long overdue. It is assumed that the estimate before the Council was for the whole of this specification and we suggest that an up-to-date figure covering only essential repairs to the tower should be obtained as a matter of urgency.

(4) Historical Considerations

Having recently completed an extensive programme of research, I have just been commissioned by Kent University to write an architectural history of Otford Palace to be published in a book later this year. I hope to follow it up with a modest booklet designed for ordinary visitors to the site. In more than one letter to your Council, I have mentioned my intention to publish and that I would hope to be able to give a favourable account of the Council's stewardship of this Palace; as matters stand, however, I must tell you that with deep regret I shall have no alternative but to comment adversely.

My work on this research has shown, for the first time ever, that Otford Palace was England's largest house when rebuilt in 1515, and exceeded in size the slightly-later Hampton Court. I shall also be explaining that even the surviving remains incorporate some of the earliest-known features of their type and high quality anywhere in England.

These are facts which, having not so far been published, are not yet generally known. I have now informed the DoE of them, but this does not necessarily mean that it will be possible for them to allocate sufficient funds to take over any part of the Palace - however much they would like to. One of your Councillors whose remarks ~~WERE~~ at the recent meeting were widely quoted in the Press is under a complete misapprehension in thinking that, if the DoE are not prepared to take over, the building was (and is) of no national significance. He also appears to believe that the tower under discussion is, in fact, the gatehouse at the other end of the range. Fortunately the tower cannot be pulled down, as he advocated, because as a scheduled Ancient Monument it is stringently protected by statute against demolition or any alteration without specific consent of the DoE.

I am sending copies of this letter to the bodies named at the end of my letter dated 31.1.81.

Yours sincerely,



Director of Studies

Old Tower

The first thing I must say is that there is a very strong feeling in the village that the Tower must be saved. As Antony Stoyke said, it is not ours, it belongs to our descendants and we have no right to destroy their inheritance.

Next time I see Cr Croughton of Kewing I will make it very plain that whatever he recalls there is a very strong local support ^{and} for preservation of the Tower and this has become apparent since the recent publicity.

This support will, in the near future, be asked to translate words into money. An appeal will be launched. To this end a PC ~~sub~~ committee has been formed and we are establishing the present position and the scope of work needed.

Let me make one point plain - the responsibility of the tower rest with its owner - SDC and no attempt to pass the buck will excuse their past dereliction of this responsibility.

To give you a very brief history, in the S R C days repairs were carried out as and when necessary - a watching brief as it were. However nothing has been done by way of repair since the SDC was formed.

In Feb 1977 the SDC resolved to carry out

②

basis of fact to be acceptable.

- The SDC now say it will cost £33,000 to repair the tower. This was only £9,000 four years ago. Maybe they are right but we have found it impossible to find out ~~where~~ ^{how} they arrived at the figure. If they just guessed and the real figure is nearer £12,000 our arguments with them take on a different light - also the amount we have to raise. Until we have the facts we cannot advise on the next moves, ~~but~~ and we are chasing the people involved to give us those facts. Also we have that the SDC are unwilling to delay the expense so that it will be included in 1981/82 year. This must be verified.
- One thing I can say loud and clear - the people of Oxford will not allow the tower to fall into a pile of bricks and despite other commitments the Village ~~will~~ might make money must and will be found for whatever must be done.

→ We are also looking into the possibility of alternative ownership - DOE, Kent Monumant or even PC - and the cost involved. Even Concession is being considered - all is being considered and investigated with urgency and we hope to make our recommendations to the PC in the very near future.

Mobil letter.
interest + commitment

- ① Information -
- ② Source of Funds
- ③ Support

Ask Alan Palmer + Medhurst
for Copy of Specification
+ Source of £33,000. figure.

Next Meeting Tues 12th May. 8.00.

Check Doggett re restoration Builders

Directive to Sub. Cttee. from
Parish Council 2.8.81

To investigate the needs of
repair and preservation, and to formulate
a programme for this work and
advise on methods of fundraising,
once a measure has been taken.
Further, to seek what assistance
might be provided by Gov. D.C.
in view of their responsibility.
To report back.

Monday
16-3-81

52 Tudor Drive,
Ottford

Dear David,

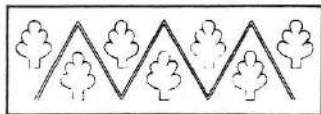
I enclose for information a copy of a letter I have sent re Ottford Palace, which represents the current situation as I see it. With tomorrow evening's meeting in mind, I have thought it advisable for you to have this in time to read beforehand. I am dropping copies this evening through the letter-boxes of Pat Matthews, Joan Bucke + Derek Rickard. I'll bring a few more copies to the meeting as I don't know who else will be there.

Hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Anthony Stögel

SEVENOAKS



DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, ARGYLE ROAD,

SEVENOAKS, KENT. TN13. 1HG.

SECRETARY D.C. ORGLES LL.B.

Miss T. Middlemiss,
Secretary,
The Otford Society,
8 Tudor Drive,
Otford,
Sevenoaks,
Kent.

TEL: SEVENOAKS 59711

EXT: 260

ASK FOR: Mr. Orgles

MY REF: OS.2/DCO/DC

YR REF:

DATE: 16th March 1981

Dear Miss Middlemiss,

Otford Palace Tower

Further to our previous correspondence, I have to inform you that the District Council at its meeting on the 12th March resolved:-

"That the officers be instructed to enter into negotiations with the Department of the Environment or any other appropriate body to take over Otford Palace Tower and that if not successful within six months the resolution of the Amenities Committee of the 3rd June 1980 adopted by the Council on the 24th July 1980 be implemented immediately; provided that the Otford Parish Council bear 20% of the total expense."

The District Council were informed of the proposal of the Parish Council to offer help financially by means of a public appeal for funds for this purpose, but the view of the Members was that the Parish Council should, itself, bear 20% of the total expenses of carrying out the necessary works to the Tower from its own resources.

I fear that the knowledge of what happened in 1935, when the former Rural District Council agreed to buy the Gatehouse, the Palace Tower, the cottages and the strip of land northwards to the pond for the sum of £750 on the basis that Palace Field would be purchased for the sum of £600 to be raised by public appeal, but, in the result, that appeal failed so that the District Council itself bore the cost of purchasing the field as well, may have caused their decision.

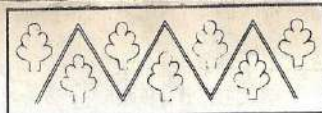
- I would be pleased to learn whether your Society would be prepared to make a contribution towards the cost of the repairs or can suggest the name of any bodies or organisations which might be willing to make a contribution towards this worthy cause.

Yours sincerely,

Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

Tower
file



DISTRICT COUNCIL

SEVENOAKS, KENT. TN13. 1HG.

SECRETARY D.C. ORGLES LL.B.

Mrs. D.A. Wright,
Clerk to the Council,
Otford Parish Council,
Little Pilgrims Way East,
Otford,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

TEL: SEVENOAKS 59711
EXT: 260
ASK FOR: Mr. Orgles
MY REF: OS.2/DCO/DC
YR REF:

DATE: 16th April 1981

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Otford Palace Tower

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 13th April and in reply to paragraph 4 enclose a photostat copy of the minutes of the Council meeting of the 12th March, from which you will see that the wording of the minute accords with the terms of my letter to you. The wording of that resolution does not demand that the Otford Parish Council shall bear a percentage of the total expense; it means, quite simply, that if the negotiations are not successful and the Parish Council provide their 20%, then the District Council will carry out the work. I can confirm that it was the view of the District Council Members that the Parish Council should fund their contribution towards the cost from their own resources and not by way of public appeal.

No tenders are to hand because, so far, tenders have not been sought. There is little point in seeking tenders now for work which may not be carried out for a period of six months, such tenders would be very unreliable and out of date and not acceptable for contract purposes.

I am not proposing to organise an appeal for funds. In my response to a number of organisations who have been urging that work should be carried out to the Tower, I have sought their assistance by asking for the names of any other bodies who they think might be interested in taking over the Tower or who might be prepared to offer some financial support.

If money is set aside in the estimates in any particular year and is not expended in that year, it is not automatically carried forward to any subsequent year. Therefore, any money estimated for in the past, but not expended, is not now available.

I note the terms of the resolution passed at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The terms of your letter will be brought to the attention of Members when this matter is next under consideration.

Yours sincerely,


Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

Council - 12th March 1981

577

(4) Minute 44(1) - Capital Projects 1981/82

Amendment: Gills Mrs. Mervin...



Department of the Environment

Room 324 Fortress House 23 Savile Row London W1X 2HE

Telephone 01-734 6010 ext 445
GTN 2503

A D Stoyel Esq
Director of Studies
Sevenoaks District Architectural History
52 Tudor Drive
Otford
Sevenoaks
Kent TN14 5QR

Your reference

Our reference

AA 50951/2

Date

7 May 1981

Dear Mr Stoyel

OTFORD PALACE

Thank you very much for your several letters about the Palace.

You will wish to know that following the meeting of the District Council on 12 March the Department was duly approached as to whether it would consider taking over the guardianship of the Palace Tower. We have given the request careful consideration, but I am sure that it will come as no surprise to you to learn that regretfully we have had to decline. As you know, there is a virtual embargo on our accepting further guardianship commitments because of financial and staffing restraints. The Council has been further advised that there is little prospect of the present policy coming to an end, and even were it to do so it is unlikely we could consider taking guardianship of the Palace remains. *in the foreseeable future,*

We consider that this is a monument which should be within the competence of the Council to look after themselves particularly when we are prepared to offer grant aid and provide technical advice. Nevertheless, we appreciate that the Council has not so far demonstrated much anxiety to carry out the repairs to the building and we will continue to encourage them to carry out the necessary work.

I realise that this letter will come as a disappointment to you after all the efforts you have made to secure a future for the monument, but unfortunately there is little more we can do at the present time.

Yours sincerely

P A STOCKER

Minutes of Preservation of Otford Palace Tower Sub-Committee Meeting
held in the Village Hall on 12th May, 1981.

Present: Cllr. D. Prestage - Chairman
Cllr Mrs. J. Buck
Cllr Mrs. P. Matthews
Mr. L Metcalfe.
Cllr Mrs. M.I. Martin - Secretary.
Mr. D. Rickard
Mr. A.D. Stoyel
Mr. C. Ward

1. Report of Last Meeting:

The Report was read and on deletion of the word "commercial" relating to the future use of the Tower as a means of ensuring its continued preservation in the penultimate paragraph, it was approved as a correct record.

2. Progress since Last Meeting:

The Department of the Environment had replied to Mr. Stoyel regretfully declining to take on the guardianship of the Tower, because due to current financial restraints there was an embargo on its taking on more buildings. Moreover, it considered that it was well within the capability of the District Council to provide adequate maintenance and care for the Tower and to that end was willing to assist with grant aid.

The Ancient Monuments Society had not replied to Mr. Stoyel - it was not their custom, but he thought they would have exerted some pressure on Sevenoaks District Council to meet its obligations in respect of the Tower.

Mr. Stoyel had reported on the current situation to the Kent Historical Buildings Committee at a late April Meeting. He had taken up a suggestion to write to Mr. Gaynor, the new S.D.C. Planning Officer, who had replied expressing his appreciation of the very great importance of Otford Palace to the residents and his view that his fellow officers and Council members were of a like mind. Colonel Thrift, a member of KHBC in his capacity as Chairman of the KAPC Executive Committee, had been horrified to learn that Sevenoaks District Council Secretary, Mr. Orgles, had approached the Parish Council and other local bodies with what he termed "a begging bowl". He confirmed to Cllr Prestage at a later KAPC Meeting that he proposed to put the matter to the NALC to establish its views on the correctness of surcharging a Parish Council with 20% of a repair cost which was clearly the responsibility of the District Council.

The Chairman read the Notes kindly provided by Mrs. Adela Wright, Technical Adviser to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which up-dated the Report and Specification prepared in 1977 by Mr. Campbell, Ancient Monuments Architect of DoE. It was agreed to combine both documents to produce a specification to be used to obtain budget estimates.

Mrs. Buck queried whether or not the Committee should ask Mr. Orgles to obtain quotations forthwith bearing in mind the speedily deteriorating condition of the Tower which rendered the 6 months waiting period quite impractical. Mr. Stoyel said he had asked

continued/.....

on 12th May, 1981.

produce a specification and estimates and the Parish Council agreed to find 20% or part of total cost, then repair work could proceed without further delay. Mr. Stoyel felt strongly that having met with refusal from the DoE the District Council should shoulder its responsibility for the Tower as owner, and the Parish Council should not commit itself to paying 20% of the total cost, in fact, all reference to 20% should be omitted in future and if a contribution remains obligatory rather say "a reasonable amount". Mr. Ward felt the Committee should do all in its power and capability to minimize any further delay. To further this aim it was agreed to explore sources for grants using Mrs. Adela Wright's short-list.

The Committee resolved that it should:-

- I. (i) hasten to produce a specification and therewith obtain estimates, even going to the extent of paying for estimates if necessary (with the sanction of the Parish Council) although members shared Mr. Stoyel's strong conviction that the obtaining of estimates was strictly the duty of the District Council

(It was considered that if the Committee members as amateurs were able to produce an acceptable specification and also estimates then surely that should give it a lever and not a little weight and improved status in dealing with the District Council.)

- I. (ii) seek to produce a list of probable sources of grants.

- II. endeavour to obtain a better value in achievement over total expenditure for the immediate repairs estimated to cost £1,200.00.

It was hoped that achievement of I (i) and (ii) would mean that the District Council could no longer procrastinate. Without any shadow of doubt the Committee was convinced it was essential repair work should be effected before the Winter.

7. Publicity for Preservation of Palace at Village Fête.

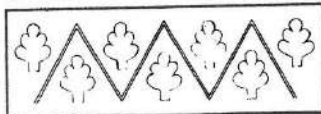
Mr. Ward gave details of the publicity which the Archaeological Society intended to give the poor state of the Palace Tower at its Exhibition at the Village Fete.

8. Next Meeting:

The next meeting would be called when it was indicated that progress made or new information warranted one.

The meeting then closed.

SEVENOAKS



DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, ARGYLE ROAD,

SEVENOAKS, KENT. TN13. 1HG.

SECRETARY D.C. ORGLES LL.B.

A.D. Stoyel, Esq.,
52 Tudor Drive,
Otford,
Sevenoaks,
Kent. TN14 5QR

TEL: SEVENOAKS 59711

EXT: 260

ASK FOR: Mr. Orgles

MY REF: OS.2/DCO/DC

YR REF:

DATE: 1st May 1981

Dear Sir,

Otford Palace Tower

Further to my letter of the 1st April, I am writing to inform you that, following the site meeting on the 13th April, which was attended by you, Mr. Prestage and Mr. Hook, the Council's Structural Engineer, I am informed by him that while a small section of brickwork and stone quoins at the top of the north west corner of the Tower is in very poor condition, it is not considered to be in immediate danger of collapse and, therefore, is not dangerous to the public using the footpath. The Technical Services Officer's estimate of the cost of carrying out repairs to this section of brickwork and quoins is £1,200, based on current market prices. Of this figure, the provision of the necessary scaffolding, ladders and transport etc. amounts to approximately £800.

This information will be reported to the next meeting of the Amenities Committee.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

COPY

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

G. E. Allan, Esq.
Acting Secretary
The Kent Building Preservation Trust
15 Manor Road
FOLKESTONE Kent
CT20 2AN

A. D. STOYEL
52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

25th May 1981

Dear Mr Allan,

I was pleased to receive your letter of 18th May and to know that the Trust is still active. Not having received any reply to my letter dated 6.9.79, I was beginning to wonder.

I am afraid that I shall not be able to attend the forthcoming Leeds Castle Conference, but I have read the details with great interest and hope that the event will prove both successful on the day and effective in subsequent results.

It was kind of you to think of me and the difficulties I have been having over Otford Palace during the past four years while heading a campaign for the proper care of this important monument, with valuable support from local, county and national bodies. In this case, however, the difficulties have been entirely with Sevenoaks District Council. Far from being indifferent, the DoE have been - and are continuing to be - extremely helpful; but for their inescapable financial and staffing restraints at the present time, they might even have taken the Palace into guardianship. The fact remains that the Council, as owners, ought to be perfectly competent to look after the structure themselves and to treat it with pride as one of their District's most notable historic buildings. So far, they have lacked the will to do so, but all concerned - including the DoE - are working hard to persuade them. As a scheduled Ancient Monument, it qualifies for grant aid from the DoE, who also provide all necessary technical advice, so the Council really have no excuse for their intransigent attitude.

Otford will be represented at the Conference by Mrs Joan Buck (Parish Councillor) and Mrs Thelma Middlemiss (Secretary, The Otford Society). Mrs Buck is especially well acquainted with the salient problems concerning the Palace and will come prepared to give a brief summary of the situation to date.

Yours sincerely,

ADS

Director of Studies

COPY

Mr. David Prestage

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Anthony D. Stoyel
52 Tudor Drive
Otford
Sevenoaks
TN14 5QR

The Clerk,
Otford Parish Council

7th April 1981

Dear Mrs Wright,

OTFORD PALACE

At last Friday's meeting in Maidstone of the Kent Historic Buildings Committee, I gave a full account of the present situation regarding the Palace and, as expected, the members were unanimously sympathetic.

Among those present was Lt.Col.A.H. Thrift, General Secretary of the Kent Voluntary Service Council; I understand that he also holds office in the Kent Association of Parish Councils. During a lengthy discussion of my report, Col.Thrift expressed great concern over the principle that Sevenoaks District Council should have included in their 12.3.81 resolution a proviso that a constituent Parish Council must bear a specific share of the cost of repairing property belonging to the District Council and for which they alone were responsible. He considered that such a demand was possibly unprecedented and that Otford should regard this as a test case to be firmly rejected in the interests of Parish Councils generally.

Also present was the Maidstone Borough Planning Officer, who said he felt sure that his former colleague Mr Gaynor, the new S.D.C. Planning Officer, would be a useful ally in this matter. I have, therefore, sent a personal letter to Mr Gaynor asking him to use his influence as far as he can to get the situation on to a more sensible footing.

The Committee had, of course, already written to S.D.C. supporting my letter of 31.1.81. Mr Orgles had replied acquainting them with the 12.3.81 resolution and asking for a contribution. His request was received with derision, since the Committee is not a fund-holding body, and it was agreed that no reply would be sent, at least until the Department of the Environment's reactions are known. Similar requests for contributions have, as you know, been received by local societies and I understand that these 'begging-bowl' tactics were adopted without the authority or knowledge of District Councillors.

I have just heard from The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings that, in view of the further deterioration in the tower, they are again writing to S.D.C. to urge that action should be taken as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

c.c. Mr Prestage
Historical Society
Otford Society

AS

OTFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs. D.A. WRIGHT, LITTLE PILGRIMS, 2 PILGRIMS WAY EAST, OTFORD,
SEVENOAKS, KENT, TN14 5QN.
(Telephone: Otford 2546)

13th April 1981.

Copy D. Prestage

D.C. Orgles Esq.,
Secretary,
Sevenoaks District Council,
Argyle Road,
Sevenoaks,
Kent.

Dear Mr. Orgles,

Otford Palace Tower.

Your letter of the 18th March, which arrived five days late, has been reported to this Council and to the Annual Parish Meeting. Reaction was very mixed to different parts of the letter, particularly in the light of earlier and subsequent events, but I will try to interpret the feelings of these two Meetings as accurately as possible.

Firstly, the Meetings were pleased that at last there is a possibility of some action. Naturally all concerned urge that this should be initiated as early as possible and be as full and effective as can be arranged. The most recent reports as to the dangerous condition of the parapet must increase the already great sense of urgency.

Secondly, there was annoyance and even anger, that having ignored its clear responsibility, which should have resulted in the Tower being properly dealt with when funds were available, and at a fraction of the present anticipated cost, the District Council now seeks to make its own late compliance with fundamental duty conditional upon a substantial percentage of an unknown sum being raised locally. Some clarification is needed of this aspect of your letter but this request should not in anyway be taken as acceptance of the principle that a District Council is legally or morally right in making such a condition.

It is noted that in the Technical Services Officer's Report of the Council Meeting held on the 12th March (Item 3 2.0) that the Parish of Otford is to be requested for a 20% contribution towards the total cost, whereas in your letter you state that the Meeting resolved that the Otford Parish Council bear 20% of the total cost. You will realise that the implications of these two requests vary tremendously.

If the first version is correct my Council has asked that I convey to you that this Council is prepared to approach the residents of Otford initiating a Public Appeal for funds. In fact money has already been offered as a result of the publicity. This gesture is made because we, in Otford, do care about the future of the Tower. Whilst it may be the property of the District Council it certainly would matter to Otford if it fell down. The Council wish to decisively make the point that Otford will make a contribution to essential repairs, this would be a contribution because you, as owners of the property, do not have the right to demand an offload of 20% of costs onto any other body. The Council is unable to give a categorical statement that 20% of costs will be met because apparently, there is no specification or costing to hand. It would obviously be unethical to expect the Council to commit Otford to raising an unspecified sum! Perhaps on this subject you are able to inform this Council why, after a lapse of six months, no tenders are to hand.

This Council understands that you have already been in touch with local organisations asking for funds, this appears to be quite contradictory. Are you intending to run the Appeal or do you wish this to be done in the Village? The inference drawn from these requests is that the Parish Council will itself be expected to give 20%. Does this mean that the residents would be paying by direct response to you, through rates

Cont/.....

D. C. Orgles Esq.,
Secretary,
Sevenoaks District Council.

13th April 1981.
Page 2.

resultant from the Parish Council's precept and again through rates for the District Council's contribution?

Finally, there was a high degree of amusement mixed with incredulity at your suggestion that the behaviour of our forebears almost fifty years ago, may in some measure have influenced or perhaps even justified your Council's attitude at this time. I am afraid I can't respond to this. Outdated as our Parish filing system is, it doesn't go back as far as 1935 and neither do our Councillors nor very few of our Parishioners. However, our records do reveal that in 1977 £9,000 was earmarked by your Council for repairs essential at that time for the Tower, but that this money was never expended! What a pity, had it been all this effort would have been unnecessary now. Presumably this sum is still available towards the ultimate cost?

In conclusion I give below the resolution passed at the Annual Parish Meeting on 23rd March 1981

That this Annual Parish Meeting deplores the total indifference displayed by the Sevenoaks District Council towards the preservation of a unique example of our National heritage and its attempts to pass its formerly acknowledged responsibilities in regard to the registered Ancient Monument known as Otford Palace to the Parish Council and people of Otford.

The District Council is reminded of its earlier acceptance of its liability to repair and preserve this building which has been owned by the Council and its predecessors for over 45 years and could have been repaired at a fraction of the anticipated present day cost had work been carried out when originally required.

Whilst expressing willingness to assist with the cost of repairs this Meeting regrets that such a measure should be necessary due entirely to delays and neglect arising from the inaction and evasiveness of the District Council and its Officers and accordingly urges that preparatory work be put in hand forthwith so as to ensure that repair work can be commenced in September 1981 at the latest if the District Council is then the owner of the site.

Whilst the Chairman expressed sorrow that such terms were used in reference to a Council and its Officers with whom a happy relationship and co-operation had always been known and would hopefully continue, the mood of the Meeting was such to insist that on this occasion the criticism was fully justified.

I shall be pleased to hear from you as soon as you are able and trust that a copy of this letter will be circulated to your members at the next Meeting of the Council on the 30th April.

Yours sincerely,

Clerk.

Thank you for your letter of the 18th March, received on the 23rd. The contents of which were noted by this Council.

Certain points of your letter are causing confusion and my Council would appreciate clarification.

It is noted from the Technical Services Officer's Report of the Council Meeting held on the 12th March (Item 3 2.0) that the Parish of Otford is to be requested for a 20% contribution towards the total cost, whereas in your letter you state that the Meeting resolved that the Otford Parish Council bear 20% of the total cost. You will realise that the implications of these two versions vary tremendously.

If the first version is correct my Council has asked that I convey to you that this Council is prepared to approach residents of Otford initiating a Public Appeal for funds. In fact money has already been offered as a result of the publicity. This gesture is made because we, in Otford, do care about the future of the Tower. Whilst it may be the property of the District Council it certainly would matter to Otford if it fell down. This ~~gesture~~^b Council wish to decisively make the point that Otford will make a contribution to essential repairs, this would be a contribution because you, as owners of the property, do not have the right to demand an offload of 20% of costs onto any other body. The Council is unable to give a categorical statement that 20% of costs will be met because apparently, there is no specification or costing to hand. It would obviously be unethical to expect the Council to commit Otford to raising an unspecified sum! Perhaps on this subject you are able to inform this Council why, after a lapse of six months, no tenders are to hand.

a reasonable sum
However, within reason it does seem likely that Otford will raise ~~20%~~ of costs, possibly with financial ~~support~~ support from this Council to 'top-up' whatever sum is collected.

On the second implication. My Council is most concerned that letters have been received from you by organisations in the village ~~and elsewhere~~ asking what contribution they will be making. The inference drawn from these requests is that the Parish Council will itself be expected to give 20%. Does this mean that the residents would be paying by direct response to you, through rates resultant from the Parish Council precept and again through rates for the District Council's contribution? Is this a fair request?

Cont/...

Page 2,

You quote in your letter a previous experience in 1935 when an appeal for funds failed. I am afraid that this cannot be responded to. Outdated as our Parish filing system is, it doesn't go back as far as 1935 and neither do our Councillors. However, our records do reveal that in 1977 £9,000 was earmarked ^{by SDC} for repairs essential at that time for the Tower, but that this money was never expended! What ~~a~~ pity, had it been all this effort would have been unnecessary now.

In conclusion I give below the resolution passed at the Annual Parish Meeting of the Council unanimously.

*That this ~~Council~~-----

I shall be pleased to hear from you as soon as you are able and trust that a copy of this letter will be circulated to your members at the next Meeting of the Council on the 30th April.

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Otford Palace Tower

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 13th April and in reply to paragraph 4 enclose a photostat copy of the minutes of the Council meeting of the 12th March, from which you will see that the wording of the minute accords with the terms of my letter to you. The wording of that resolution does not demand that the Otford Parish Council shall bear a percentage of the total expense; it means, quite simply, that if the negotiations are not successful and the Parish Council provide their 20%, then the District Council will carry out the work. I can confirm that it was the view of the District Council Members that the Parish Council should fund their contribution towards the cost from their own resources and not by way of public appeal.

No tenders are to hand because, so far, tenders have not been sought. There is little point in seeking tenders now for work which may not be carried out for a period of six months, such tenders would be very unreliable and out of date and not acceptable for contract purposes.

I am not proposing to organise an appeal for funds. In my response to a number of organisations who have been urging that work should be carried out to the Tower, I have sought their assistance by asking for the names of any other bodies who they think might be interested in taking over the Tower or who might be prepared to offer some financial support.

If money is set aside in the estimates in any particular year and is not expended in that year, it is not automatically carried forward to any subsequent year. Therefore, any money estimated for in the past, but not expended, is not now available.

I note the terms of the resolution passed at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The terms of your letter will be brought to the attention of Members when this matter is next under consideration.

Yours sincerely,


Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

577

Council - 12th March 1981

(4) Minute 44(1) - Capital Projects 1981/82

Amendment: Cllr. Mrs. Medhurst proposed and Cllr. Palmer seconded that the recommendation in minute 44(1)(b) (page 555) be amended by the insertion of the following words after "Otford Palace Tower":-

"if not successful within six months, the relevant resolution of the Amenities Committee of the 3rd June 1980, adopted by the Council on the 24th July 1980, be implemented immediately; providing that the Otford Parish Council meets 20% of the total expense".

Upon the amendment being put to the meeting, it was declared CARRIED.

11th May 1981

A. D. STÖYEL
52 Tudor Drive
Otford

Dear David,

OTFORD PALACE TOWER

I enclose in duplicate a copy of Mrs Wright's report produced in response to my request that she should update the report & specification prepared in 1977 by Mr Campbell, Ancient Monuments Architect of the DoE. As a matter of professional etiquette, she was a trifle hesitant about it and felt that this was something Mr Campbell himself should do. I assured her that her report was desired by our Committee to enable them to seek rough estimates purely for their own purposes.

As she has told me, in general the situation is as in 1977 but very much worse.

The only thing I would add is that she is strongly against the use of plastic material to seal the top and side openings of the tower. This was a modification proposed by SDC and agreed by DoE in 1977. She would regard pigeonproof netting (as originally proposed by DoE) as far more satisfactory aesthetically and for practical purposes, and she is opposed to any other form of roofing. In her opinion, provided the internal brickwork is properly pointed, wind erosion is not a material factor. Upon reflection, I absolutely agree with her. It would be a great pity to darken the interior unnecessarily. Plastic, though transparent when new, would not long remain so. If netting is sufficient, that seems to me the obvious and much more economical answer.

Yours sincerely,

David Prestage, Esq.
47 Knighton Road
Otford



OTFORD PALACE TOWER

The following notes are a brief description of items that I think should be dealt with under urgent repairs. They should be read in conjunction with Mr Campbell's Specification. My inspection was from ground level, without the use of ladders. Close inspection of the upper part of the tower may reveal other urgent problems needing attention and provision should be made for this.

Erect scaffolding and remove vegetation growing in the walls.

There is deterioration in the mortar pointing in several places. Joints have opened, resulting in water penetration and frost has probably accelerated the damage. The dense sand/cement mortar of the capping should be removed. The top few courses of brickwork may also need to be removed and rebuilt with a suitable mortar. In some areas, particularly the N.W. corner, this may involve rebuilding twelve courses or more. Provision should be made for the possible insertion of a R.C. beam at this corner. A D.P.C. should be provided at the top of the brickwork of the wall and rendered over to form a capping.

Brickwork below the sills of the upper windows appears also to be affected by water penetration, probably due to eroded sills. These may be in need of repair with the insertion of a D.P.C. below them. The brickwork needs repointing below the sills.

The window in the east wall with shoring should be investigated and the stonework replaced where necessary or the opening blocked as suggested in the D.O.E. Report.

Pigeonproof netting should be provided over all openings including the top of the building.

Internally, all items mentioned in Mr Campbell's Report should be dealt with at this stage.

10th May 1981

ADELA L. L. WRIGHT A.R.I.B.A.

Chartered Architect

Technical Adviser, Society for the
Protection of Ancient Buildings

The Walled Garden
Kippington Road
Sevenoaks
Kent

Telephone Sevenoaks 51590

on 12th May, 1981.

Sevenoaks District Council to reconsider the standing order establishing the 6 months waiting period and had been informed that his suggestion would be discussed at the next Amenities Committee Meeting on 9th June. To expedite the actual starting date of repair work it was decided to go ahead and seek budget estimates and, in case it might prove necessary - the Committee not being empowered to execute contracts, permission should be sought of the Parish Council for payment for those estimates.

3. Repairs Necessary Immediately

On Mr. Stoyel's initiative, the Chairman and Mr. Stoyel had attended a site meeting with Mr. Hook of Sevenoaks District Council to examine the outward lean on the North West side of the Tower, which appeared in March. Mr. Hook expressed the opinion that were the leaning section not repaired before winter, then he would be forced to recommend that the footpath be closed. The Chairman circulated photographs he had taken of the affected section, whereon the ravages of the weather were clearly visible, e.g. erosion of mortar. Mr. Stoyel read Mr. Orgles's letter of 1st May stating that Mr. Hook had reported the leaning section of the parapet and stone quoins were not in immediate danger of collapse. Albeit repairs deemed to be urgent were estimated to cost £1,200.00 based on current market prices :

Actual repair work:	£400.00
Scaffolding, transport and equipment:	£800.00
	<u>£1,200.00</u>

After discussion of the poor cost effectiveness of the above estimate it was decided the Committee should endeavour to get more actual work done than that covered by the £400. 00. in order to achieve a more equable balance i.e. a more acceptable ratio of productivity to overheads.

4. Ownership Control:

The Committee was greatly concerned when it emerged following a question from Mrs. Buck that there was no means of controlling the ownership of the Palace. Listed Building requirements afforded a measure of protection against change of the building, and its present poor state of repair would deter possible undesirable buyers.

5. Public Liability of District Council:

Mr. Rickard raised the question of District Council's liability to the tenants of the cottages. Mr. Stoyel expressed his view that there was not as much danger on the side of the cottages.

6. Action:

Mrs. Buck said she would like to look ahead on the assumption that estimates for the whole project were to hand. How should the Committee then proceed bearing in mind that the privilege of being the prime movers remained with the District Council by dint of ownership? The Chairman considered that the only way to break out of the present vicious circle was, presuming the DoE had informed the District Council they could not take the Palace into guardianship but could grant financial aid and if the Committee could

continued/...

The Kent Building Preservation Trust

Registered Office . 15 Manor Road . Folkestone .
Kent CT20 2AH Telephone (0303) 52333



Anthony Stoyel Esq.,
Director of Studies,
Sevenoaks & District Architectural History,
52 Tudor Drive,
Otford,
Sevenoaks,
Kent TN14 5QR

18 May 1981

Dear Mr Stoyel,

Leeds Castle Conference, Saturday 13 June 1981

I am writing to thank you very much on behalf of the Trust for your assistance in the Neglected Building Survey we carried out last year and to send you details of the conference we have organised at Leeds Castle on the above date to discuss the problem of neglect in the County.

Shortly before the Conference, we shall be publishing the survey results and a report based on them, intended to highlight some of the problems and generally to generate publicity and concern. Many amenity societies and most district councils are attending the conference, including Sevenoaks District Council.

If you would like to attend the conference, or to send a representative, please complete the enclosed form and return it as soon as possible (with remittance please).

One of the themes which emerges from the report (which is currently being printed) is the long-standing indifference of the DoE to the fate of a number of outstanding buildings in the County and it occurs to me that the conference might be an opportunity to mention your difficulties with Sevenoaks and DoE over Otford Palace. The press will be attending the conference in some strength and might be persuaded to follow up the case.

Yours sincerely,

G. E. Allan
G.E. Allan
Acting Secretary.

From the Secretary

ANCIENT MONUMENTS SOCIETY

*Founded in 1924 for the Study and Conservation of Ancient Monuments,
Historic Buildings, and Fine Old Craftsmanship*

ST. ANDREW-BY-THE-WARDROBE, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON EC4V 5DE
Tel: 01-236 3934

Mr A D Stoyel
Director of Studies,
(Sevenoaks District Architectural History),
52 Tudor Drive,
Otford,
SEVENOAKS,
TN14 5QR

May 19th, 1981

Dear Mr. Stoyel,

Otford Palace

I apologise that I have not replied hitherto but I have been lobbying in person.

I now have it on the highest authority, although you may doubtless know, that the Ancient Monuments Secretariat will not take the Palace into guardianship, even in part. It is now their normal practice to offer 50% towards the cost of repairs instead, although I note they only talk of a third in the case of Otford.

We must therefore lobby Sevenoaks and the Department of the Environment again along these lines and this we shall do.

Does Sevenoaks have a municipal lottery, the proceeds of which would be spent on the Palace?

I shall see about some national publicity - do you have a good photo?

Incidentally I have found a short reference to the Palace in Illustrated London News February 24th 1849 where Warham is credited with having spent £33,000 on it!

Somehow this vicious cycle of passing the buck must be broken.

Yours Sincerely

President: The MOST HON. THE MARQUESS OF ANGLESEY, D.L., F.S.A., F.R.HIST.S., HON. F.R.I.B.A.

Chairman: IVOR BULMER-THOMAS, M.A., F.S.A., HON. D.SC.

Hon. Secretary: COL. CEDRIC HALL, M.A.

Hon. Editor: MICHAEL McGARVIE, B.A., F.S.A.

Secretary: MATTHEW SAUNDERS, M.A.

Hon. Treasurer: Miss D. M. VAUGHAN, M.A., F.C.A.

Assistant Secretary: Mrs SUSAN GOLD, B.A.

M. H. Saunders

FALSE!!

COPY

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

The Secretary
Ancient Monuments Society
St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe
Queen Victoria Street
LONDON EC4V 5DE

A. D. STOTEL
52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

25th May 1981

Dear Mr Saunders,

OTFORD PALACE

I was delighted to receive your letter of 19th May. I must confess that I was beginning to wonder whether your Society had decided not to pursue this case, and we are badly in need of the sort of encouragement you have now given us.

Yes, the DoE wrote informing me that they had been regretfully obliged to refuse to take any part of the Palace into guardianship on account of their financial and staffing restraints. In any case they consider that it ought to be within the competence of Sevenoaks District Council to care for this monument, particularly when they are prepared to offer grant aid and provide technical advice. In principle of course they are right, but the Council will have to undergo a radical change of attitude before they can be regarded as fit custodians, short-term or long-term.

The Council's Amenities Committee is to discuss the Palace again at a meeting in early-June. I have written expressing serious concern about the 6-month delay before they intend even to put any repairs out to tender and asking them to reconsider their resolution to that effect. In its present state the tower cannot be expected to stand up to another winter. Part of its parapet could easily collapse at any time. When writing to Sevenoaks, please do not forget to ask specifically that your letter be placed before Councillors; events have shown that otherwise they are unlikely even to hear of it.

Sevenoaks has no municipal lottery. The proposed public appeal is the only practicable local measure to help the Council out of the hole into which they have dug themselves. But it can hardly be launched until they are persuaded to obtain up-to-date estimates.

National publicity certainly might help (though the Council themselves seem immune from the odium accorded by local publicity) and I have ordered 2 photos which will follow shortly. One shows the full extent of the main standing remains, while the other is a close-up of the tower alone.

The story that Warham spent £33,000 on the Palace has been proved false; unfortunately there is no known record of the cost of his rebuilding, but the evidence shows that it must have been a good deal less.

Yours sincerely,

AS

Director of Studies

COPY

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

A. D. STOYEL
52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

The Secretary
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN13 1HG

Your ref. OS.2/DCO/DC

25th May 1981

Dear Mr Orgles,

OTFORD PALACE

With reference to your letter of 1st May, I think you should know that during the current year we have been monitoring the tower. On 17.2.81 the parapet was vertical. By 21.3.81 it had developed an outward lean of 7.5 degrees along the NW side, involving the top 12 courses of brickwork and associated stone quoins. Movement to that extent in the space of one month means that instability (due to the decayed condition of what little mortar remains) could induce further movement at any time; if that were to occur, the lean would be too great for the parapet to hold. Moreover, at this point the wall is not solid since it contains a large chimney-flue in its thickness; part of the most unstable area is no more than the thin outer skin of this flue. If Mr Hook sees no immediate danger of collapse, then I must respectfully disagree with him. My view is supported by two qualified architects, one of them the Technical Adviser to The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, who as you may know are of national-government advisory status.

At the site meeting on 13th April, Mr Hook was emphatic to Mr Prestage and me that the neglected state of the tower as a whole, and the parapet in particular, was so serious that if nothing was done before winter the public footpath would have to be closed.

To incur expenditure of £800 for scaffolding etc. in order to carry out only £400-worth of the essential repairs would be patently ludicrous. In my letter of 23rd March, we have already asked that your Council should reconsider its decision to delay these repairs for 6 months. Apart from their intrinsic urgency, if the work is not even put out to tender until September it is hardly likely to be completed before the onset of winter which, you will remember, occurred last year in early-November.

You will know by now that the Department of the Environment, although regarding the Palace remains as of national importance, are simply not in a position to undertake guardianship and consider, very rightly in my opinion, that it ought to be within the competence of your Council to take proper care of such a notable part of the District's cultural heritage.

A. K. STEVENSON
20 Tatten Drive
Otford

Questions to which we are all awaiting answers are -

- (1) Why did your Council, upon its creation in 1974, discontinue the regular maintenance of the Palace exercised by its predecessors? Officers of the Sevenoaks Rural District Council simply got on with the job without, I believe, any need for constant recourse to Councillors. The sudden change of policy lies at the root of the present problems which, I suggest, would never have arisen if technically-qualified Officers were free to use a suitably-limited yet sufficient measure of initiative, without being hamstrung by bureaucratic instructions to refer at every stage to non-technical Councillors.
- (2) Why are there still no up-to-date specifications and estimates of (a) the urgent repairs and (b) the less-urgent but nonetheless necessary repairs to the Palace as a whole, required by the Department of the Environment? I would remind you of the necessity to obtain their approval of the technical methods to be used for all proposed repairs to this scheduled Ancient Monument. Without estimates of properly-approved works, Otford's public appeal for funds to assist your Council in its present difficulty cannot proceed and, meanwhile, we are losing the benefit of the widespread indignation and concern aroused by recent Press publicity.

It seems to us that the matter is being viewed with deplorable lack of any sense of urgency.

I shall be obliged if you will bring this letter to the notice of Councillors as soon as possible, and keep me fully informed of developments.

Yours sincerely,

ADS
Director of Studies

c. c. Sevenoaks District Council Planning Officer.

Mr David Prestage

GRANTS

Attached is result of Mrs A. Wright asking a colleague in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for advice on trusts possibly worth approaching re Otford Palace. It is annotated photocopy of same 2 pp of the 1979 edn. of Directory of Grant-Making Trusts. I interpret MS notes at top as meaning:-

- ① Trusts marked 'Charities' make grants to registered charities only (so conversely those marked 'non charities' make no such restriction).
- ② Some do not answer unsuccessful applications.
- ③ The Directory has a chapter of advice on 'Presenting your Case'.

A.D.S.

13-4-81

David

I have taken a day off from historical writing to catch up with other things. As a result, I have the enclosed copies of recent correspondence re the Palace to pass to you for information.

Have given Doreen Wright separate copies for OPC. I have also asked the Secy. of the Kent Historic Buildings Committee to write another letter of support to SDC, if possible in time for their Amenities Committee meeting.

Anthony

25.5.81



The Otford Society

Registered with the Civic Trust
Affiliated to the Council for the Protection of Rural England
and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies
Registered Charity no. 272974

Beechy Lees Lodge
St. Michael's Drive
Otford Kent TN14 5SA

The Secretary,
Sevenoaks District Council,
Argyle Road,
Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

6 April 1981

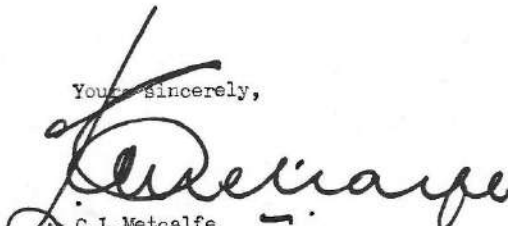
Dear Mr. Orgles,

Otford Palace Tower

I refer to your letter of 16 March to our secretary, Mrs. Middlemiss. This has now been considered by the committee, and I have to tell you at the outset that there is no question of the Society making any contribution to the cost of repairing the Tower - we do not have sufficient funds for that type of project.

However, we are co-operating with the Parish Council in preparing a plan to save this historical monument and will help in whatever fund-raising measures are agreed upon. The plan will, of course include all the steps to be taken - by whom is not yet clear - steps which the District Council has so far failed to take, in order to fulfil its obligations as the owner of this ancient monument.

Yours sincerely,


C.L. Metcalfe
Chairman

cc Mr Prestage -
Mr Wright
Mr Stoyel
Mr Meahmet
Mr Palmer

2. Newspaper clippings

Bid to save a crumbling monument

SEVENOAKS District Council has agreed to save Otford Palace — if the parish council put forward 20 per cent of the cost.

But the council will first try to get the Department of the Environment, or a similar body, to take over the responsibility.

At Thursday evening's meeting Cr Mrs S Winifred Medhurst, who represents Otford, urged the council to take on the responsibility for the dilapidated monument.

She asked the council to agree that, if no-one is found to take the Palace on within six months, a go-ahead is given for repair works to begin. "To leave the works any longer will only cost more and historical elements may be damaged," she said.

Cr John Gorton said: "I agree with Mrs Medhurst's sentiments, provided the parish council picks up 20 per cent of the bill," he said. "Let Otford put money where its mouth is. If it costs £30,000 then the residents should find £6,000."

Cr Geoffrey Blaxall, who represents Hextable and Swanley Village, said that if the Department of Environment was not prepared to take Otford Palace over the building was therefore of no national significance.

"This building is one tower of the gate house," he said, "and constitutes only one percent of Otford Palace. All the other buildings have been allowed to fall down.

"If it was in anyone else's hands it would be pulled down. The sensible thing to do with that little fraction is to pull it down and sell the stones. Then, anyone who wanted to preserve it could buy a stone.

"I don't think we should be in charge of this building," said Cr Godfrey Croughton. "I hope that we can find a willing taker for it. But we must take note of local views. As I urged before, we should support those who are willing to help themselves.

"I do not recall any strong local support for the preservation of Otford Palace. There has been no groundswell of local opinion to abandon these worthy causes to put efforts into restoring this monument. I am not convinced that local people have this in their hearts."

Cr Alan Palmer, who also represents Otford, spoke strongly against his opponents.

"I have never heard such a load of unadulterated pious clap-trap," he said. "Some members do not realise the importance of history.

"We have heard that Otford should take on responsibility for this edifice, or partial responsibility at least but if you carried that argument on to everything, the council's responsibilities would be zero.

"I wonder whether the members of the authority that took on this monument had it in mind to neglect it in this disgraceful way. This authority has neglected it.

"If we don't adopt this motion, certain members will be grateful as they will have no commitment to fulfill — then Cr Blaxall can flog his stones. I hope we have more moral courage and commitment."

Gala night for players

A HOST of well-known names will be present at the Gala night of Sevenoaks Players' La Belle Helene on March 31.

And the production will also find a place in the history of live performances at Sevenoaks' Focus Cinema. The cast of Jacques Offenbach's comic opera are the first to set foot on stage since Norman Wisdom in the 50's. And silent movie comedian Sir Charlie Chaplin was the first back in 1930.

The box office is now open at the cinema. See inside for full details. See Artifact, page six.

From the Sevenoaks Chronicle 21st March 1981.

Inspection reveals palace tower peril



'NEGLIGENCE HAS CAUSED DANGER'

A LARGE part of the parapet at the top of Otford Palace tower is in danger of falling — and pedestrians crossing Palace Field could be injured, it was warned this week.

Inspection of the Palace tower last weekend by local historian Mr Anthony Stoyel revealed that the parapet has an outward lean which has only developed recently.

This lean overlooks the much-used public footpath across the Palace Field, but total decay of the brickwork is almost as bad on the other sides and the occupants of adjoining Castle Cottages could also be in danger.

The present decay is due to an almost complete lack of mortar holding together the brick and stone of the upper building.

Mr Stoyel has increasingly campaigned over the past few years to persuade the Sevenoaks District Council to carry out restoration work on the tower, and in a letter this week to them he warns that their negligence could now result in "heavy liabilities in the event of personal injuries".

"Partial collapse at least of the upper storey must now be regarded as imminent, and virtually certain to occur unless emergency remedial measures are taken without delay," said Mr Stoyel.

MAJOR NEED

Responsibility for the tower passed to the district council in 1974, and from that time all maintenance stopped, said Mr Stoyel.

He said: "Instead of getting on with the job, the council have simply discussed it. The inevitable result is that the need for restoration has grown from a minor one in February 1977 to a major one now."

Remarks by district councillors that there was no strong local support for restoration work to the tower were unfounded, said Mr Stoyel. He called such remarks "unfairly premature" and said this week that already Otford Parish Council was receiving money for their intended public appeal even before it had been officially started.

The district council decided on March 12 to try to persuade the Department of the Environment, or a similar body, to take on responsibility for the tower — with

a proviso that if no buyer is found within six months the council will go ahead with the work. They also said Otford Parish Council was to foot 20 per cent of the bill.

Mr Stoyel called this decision "worthless" and said the DoE, or anyone else, was unlikely to accept the tower in its present condition.

"This resolution is yet another deferment of first-aid work, with no guarantee that it will be done after the prescribed six months have expired — any more than it was following the council's previous resolutions to put the repairs out to tender," he said.

'INSPIRED GUESSES'

At the annual Otford parish meeting on Monday councillors supported Mr Stoyel's views.

Mr David Prestage said no proper calculations for any repair work had been done. The figure of £33,000 had been plucked from the air and was no more than the result of "inspired guesses", he said.

"Until we know how much it will cost — whether more or less than £33,000 — and have a basis in fact for the figure, we cannot launch an appeal."

He said the district council anyway had not right to ask the people of Otford to pay for something that was not their responsibility. "It's like me saying to my next-door neighbour 'you're going to paint my house because you've been looking at it!'", he said.

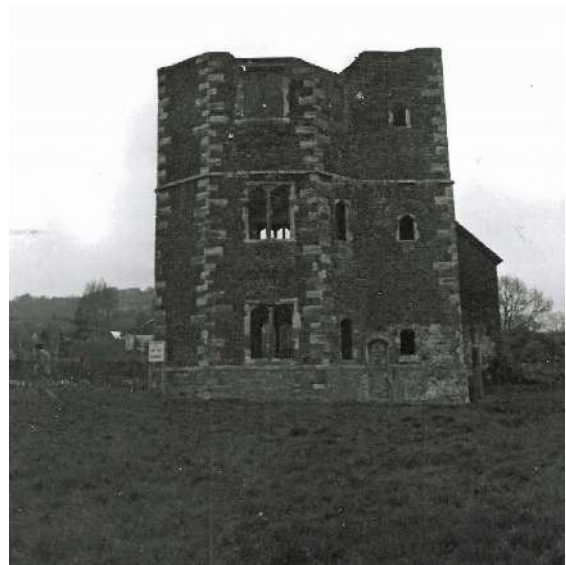
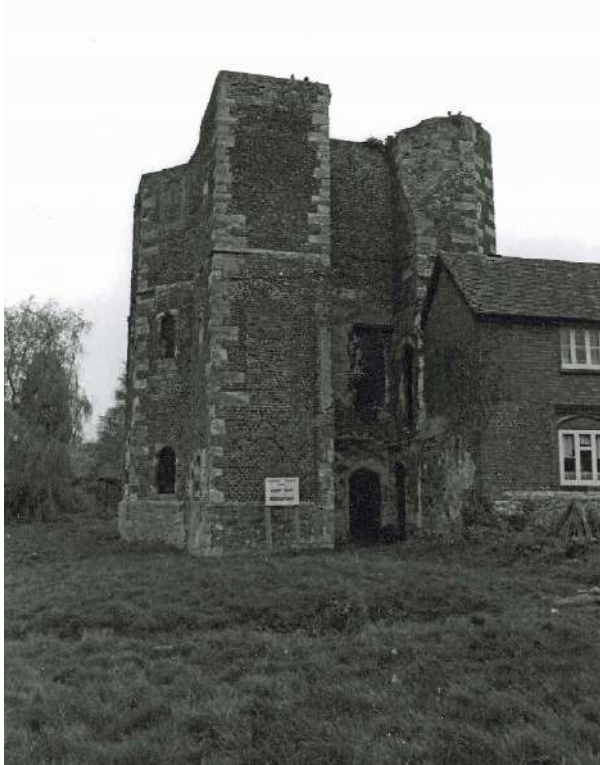
Parish council chairman Reg Lythaby said the demand for Otford to pay 20 per cent of any repair costs was, in his view immoral.

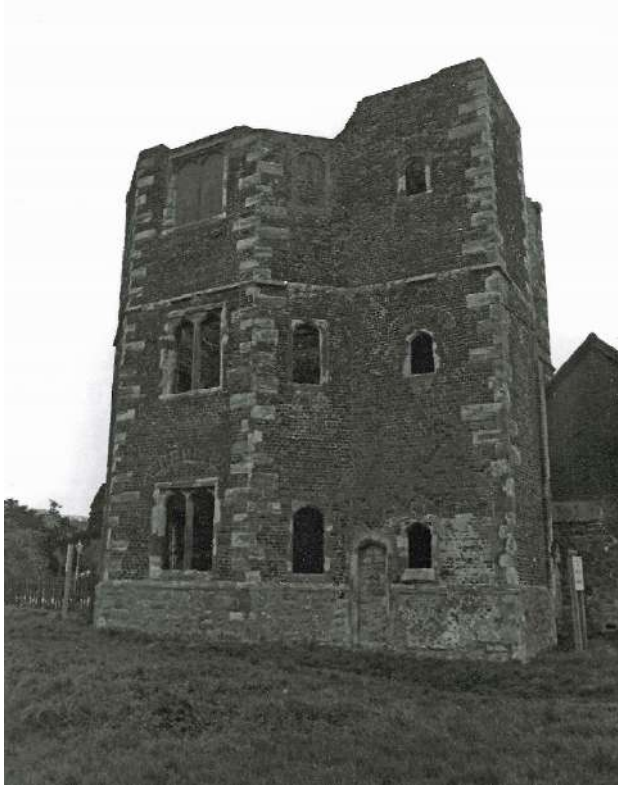
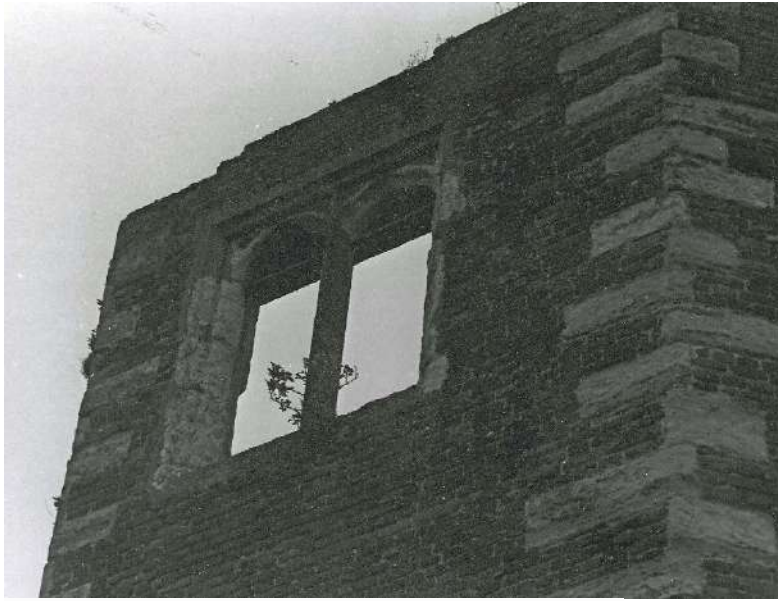
Parish councillors have told the district council: "We deplore the total indifference displayed by you towards the preservation of a unique example of our national heritage. While expressing willingness to assist with the cost of repairs we regret such a measure should be necessary due entirely to delays and neglect arising from the inaction and evasiveness of the district council. We urge that work be put in hand immediately."

ks time

3. North-West Tower prior to the repair works

These photographs were probably taken by Anthony Stoyel as part of his campaign to have the Palace Tower repaired









4. Otford Parish Council Minutes

The minutes of Otford Parish Council give a partial account of events from November 1980 to the end of 1982.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 24th November 1980. (Minute 7.2.2.)

2. Palace.
Ccr. Bennell requested that enquiries regarding repairs to the structure of the Palace be pursued once more.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 2nd February 1981. (Minute 8.1.3.)

Palace.
An invitation had been extended to District Councillors to see at first hand how extensive was the need for repairs to the Tower. A date for this visit was expected. A letter had been written by Mr. Stoyel of the Historical Society urging action and it was hoped that this would provide sufficient incentive for the money to be allocated. The Clerk was asked to support Mr. Stoyel's letter as strongly as possible.

Report on the site meeting held on 17th February 1981

Report on Site Meeting - Otford Palace Tower 17th February 1981. 11.30a.m.

Present: A.D. Stoyel.
Mrs P. Matthews O.P.C.
Mr. D. Prestage O.P.C.
Mrs J. Buck O.P.C. & Otford Society.
Mrs D.A.Wright - Clerk.O.P.C.
Mrs B. Medhurst S.D.C.
Frank Clark O.D.H.S.
Chairman of the Amenities Committee S.D.C. Mrs Rogers.
Vice Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee - Mr. Portsmore.
Vice Chairman of the Amenities Committee - Mrs Thomsett.

Mr. Stoyel read his letter to the Sevenoaks District Council of the 31st January, with enlargement on various points. He then went on to describe the functions of the existing buildings and pointed out features of interest and importance. He commented upon his recent findings that the palace was considerably larger than had been previously visualised and when built had been in fact been the largest house built at that time in England, the house being some 600' x 336' as compared with Hampton Court's 550' x 300'.

An inspection of the Palace Tower then took place, with Mr. Stoyel pointing out the problem areas. The members of the District Council present reiterated that they only had the power of recommendation and whilst appreciating that certain repairs were essential to prevent the collapse of the Tower, they were in no position to make any statement as to a positive action.

Mrs Rogers did however, undertake to have the floor of the Tower cleared of the soil and foliage. Mrs Rogers also undertook to enquire into the reasons why Mr. Stoyel's two previous letters to the S.D.C. had been unanswered.

The meeting closed at 12.45p.m.



From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 2nd March 1981. (Minute 6)

6. Palace Tower.

A meeting took place between three representatives of the District Council and ~~four~~ ^{seven} Otford representatives on 17th February. Report is on file.
At the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee of the District Council on the 26th February it was decided that the Department of the Environment should be approached and other likely organisations with a view to the tower being taken over by a responsible body. It was considered that this event was unlikely as a previous similar request had been turned down by the Department on the grounds of lack of Finance. The indications being that lack of funds and thereby any maintenance on the Tower would continue within the foreseeable future, and with the knowledge that the fabric of the tower was already deteriorating to a dangerous extent, the Council felt that a suggestion by Mr. Stoyel of the Otford & District Historical Society of forming a sub-Committee with the objective of putting forward

a Public Appeal for funds, should be adopted. This suggestion will be put to the public at the Annual Parish Meeting on the 23rd March. It was proposed by the Chairman and agreed by all that the Vice Chairman of the Council D. Prestage should be Chairman of the Sub-Committee and that such sub-Committee should investigate the need for repair and preservation of the Palace Tower and should formulate a programme for the carrying out of these works and also advise on methods of fund raising once a measure of the expenses involved can be estimated, and further to seek what assistance might be provided by the Sevenoaks District Council in view of the responsibilities of that Council, as present owners of the site. Ccr. Mrs Matthews and Ccr. Mrs Buck also agreed to accept positions on any Committee formed in this respect and it was agreed that all other interested organisations such as the Kent Historic Buildings Committee, Sevenoaks District Architectural Histor Otford & District Hisotical Society and the Otford Society should be invited to have representatives on this committee.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 30th March 1981. (Minute 6)

5. Sub-Committee for the Preservation of the Palace Tower.
One meeting of the Sub-Committee had taken place when endeavours were made to form sensible estimates for essential work to be done. This was difficult in the absence of specialist specification and costings. District Council had been unable to give costings and these were being sought.
- District Council had written, letter on file, indicating that if within a period not exceeding 6 months no outside organisation had accepted responsibility for the Tower, they would proceed with the work subject to a contribution to costs of 20% by this Council. This Council had previously offered to support District Council by means of a Public Appeal for funds and whilst maintaining that as owners, this must be the responsibility of the District Council, this Council does feel that the Tower is of vital importance to Otford and as such will endeavour by all means possible to financially assist District Council. It is considered however that the fund raising for this must be from the village of Otford and as such this Council is opposed to the approaches being made direct to village organisations by District Council for finance. This would inevitably mean that the residents of Otford are being asked to financially aid the same venture twice, not counting the contribution already made in the form of rating.
- The A.P.M. passed a resolution as attached, to District Council deploring the lack of maintenance and the passing of responsibility on the Tower.
- Mr. Stoyel had recently perceived confirmation of the state of deterioration of the Tower, brickwork on the upper part of the Tower directly overlooking the public footpath had developed an outward curve. District Council had been notified.

Extract from the minutes of Sevenoaks District Council held on 12th March 1981

Council - 12th March 1981

577

(4) Minute 44(1) - Capital Projects 1981/82

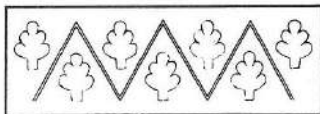
Amendment: Cllr. Mrs. Medhurst proposed and Cllr. Palmer seconded that the recommendation in minute 44(1)(b) (page 555) be amended by the insertion of the following words after "Otford Palace Tower":

"if not successful within six months, the relevant resolution of the Amenities Committee of the 3rd June 1980, adopted by the Council on the 24th July 1980, be implemented immediately; providing that the Otford Parish Council meets 20% of the total expense".

Upon the amendment being put to the meeting, it was declared CARRIED.

From Sevenoaks District Council 16th April 1981

SEVENOAKS



DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, ARGYLE ROAD,

SEVENOAKS, KENT. TN13. 1HG.

SECRETARY D.C. ORGLES LL.B.

Mrs. D.A. Wright,
Clerk to the Council,
Otford Parish Council,
Little Pilgrims Way East,
Otford,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

TEL: SEVENOAKS 59711
EXT: 260
ASK FOR: Mr. Orgles
MY REF: OS.2/DCO/DC
YR REF:

DATE: 16th April 1981

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Otford Palace Tower

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 13th April and in reply to paragraph 4 enclose a photostat copy of the minutes of the Council meeting of the 12th March, from which you will see that the wording of the minute accords with the terms of my letter to you. The wording of that resolution does not demand that the Otford Parish Council shall bear a percentage of the total expense; it means, quite simply, that if the negotiations are not successful and the Parish Council provide their 20%, then the District Council will carry out the work. I can confirm that it was the view of the District Council Members that the Parish Council should fund their contribution towards the cost from their own resources and not by way of public appeal.

No tenders are to hand because, so far, tenders have not been sought. There is little point in seeking tenders now for work which may not be carried out for a period of six months, such tenders would be very unreliable and out of date and not acceptable for contract purposes.

I am not proposing to organise an appeal for funds. In my response to a number of organisations who have been urging that work should be carried out to the Tower, I have sought their assistance by asking for the names of any other bodies who they think might be interested in taking over the Tower or who might be prepared to offer some financial support.

If money is set aside in the estimates in any particular year and is not expended in that year, it is not automatically carried forward to any subsequent year. Therefore, any money estimated for in the past, but not expended, is not now available.

I note the terms of the resolution passed at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The terms of your letter will be brought to the attention of Members when this matter is next under consideration.

Yours sincerely,


Secretary

PLEASE REPLY IMPERSONALLY TO THE SECRETARY QUOTING THE REFERENCE GIVEN ABOVE

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 27th April 1981. (Minute 4)

Palace Tower.

A letter as on file had been received from Mr. Orgles of District Council. The letter indicated that 20% of the costs of restoration should be born out of Council funds, which must inevitably mean rates. The Council considered this unfair to the public. The Committee for the Preservation of the Palace Tower had arranged a meeting shortly and it was hoped that by the next meeting of the Council a specification and costings had been prepared. It was therefore suggested that further action was delayed until after the next meeting.

District Councillor Mrs Medhurst was asked to enquire whether the amendment to the resolution calling for a direct contribution from the Parish Council had been correctly interpreted in this sense by the proposer or whether it had been intended as a contribution from the Parish of Otford supported by the Parish Council to the figure required.

A Technical Services Officer had inspected the Tower and confirmed the fears of Mr. Stoyel, that if left the Tower would be in imminent danger of collapse. In the opinion of the Officer failing the necessary repairs being carried out the Tower would be unsafe to a degree that the footpath would have to be closed to the public by next winter.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 18th May 1981. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.

Mr. Stoyel had received a letter from District Council confirming the work needed on the parapet will cost £1200, this sum included £800 for scaffolding. A budget specification is being obtained free of charge and on receipt of this the Sub-Committee will form proposal and recommendations for the Council. It had been confirmed that the monetary contribution requested by District Council could be obtained by this Council by means other than precept. The Sub-Committee was concerned that as and when the ~~xxx~~ District Council confirmed that repairs would be put in hand, the estimates were already to hand to save the necessary delay for the preparation of these.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 29th June 1981. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.

It had been confirmed by District Council that a specification of work would be drawn up and tenders requested prior to the September meeting when it would be known if any outside body had accepted responsibility for the Tower. Thanks were given to District Councillor Mrs Medhurst for the efforts she had put into obtaining this concession. Ccr. Mrs Buck commented that a recent meeting attended by her had given her information that the K.C.C. would be prepared to make financial aid available to either District Council and/or Parish Council for work of this nature.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 27th July 1981. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.

The Clerk was asked to contact District Council and ask for a copy of the specification which it was considered had now been prepared.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 24th August 1981. (Minute 7.3)

7.3. Palace Tower.

The specification had been prepared and passed to the Department of the Environment for approval and alteration. District Council agreed to let this Council have a copy of the final document. It was hoped that this matter would go before the District Council at its September Meeting.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 28th September 1981. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.
District Council had confirmed that subject to a 20% contribution from this Council towards the estimated cost of repair of £20,000.00 and the Department of the Environment meeting one third of the total cost a tender not exceeding the above figure would be accepted.
This Council had confirmed that it accepted responsibility for 20% of costs.

Note however, that there is no record in the minutes for 1981-82 of any payment to the contractors or Sevenoaks District Council, nor is there any provision in the handwritten budget for 1982-3.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 26th October 1981. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.
A copy of the specification had been received and appeared to be divided into essential and non-essential categories. On the whole the Council agreed with the work as listed. Mr. Stoyal had not received a copy of the specification and after his perusal the Clerk would be instructed if necessary on the lines of an approach to District Council. Ccr. Prestage felt that items considered to be essential or non essential in certain parts of the specification were incorrectly listed.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 30th November 1981. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.
The firm tendering for repairs to the Tower had gone into liquidation. The only other tender in the sum of £22760 was being considered by the District Council. This Council confirmed its willingness to extend its offer of a 20% to the higher figure.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 4th January 1982. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.
It was confirmed that the figure of £22760 included all works both essential and non-essential. The Clerk was asked to enquire how progress was being made and when the repairs were likely to be started.

There is no record in the minutes of Otford Parish Council of a planning application in respect of these repairs.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 1st February 1982. (Minute 7.3)

3. Palace Tower.
The scaffolding had been erected both externally and internally and work was due to commence early in February. The contractors confirmed that they would be pleased to discuss the restoration with the Councillors.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 1st March 1982. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.
Vice Chairman D. Prestage asked that the Clerk should obtain permission for him to climb the scaffolding surrounding the Tower in order to take photographs as the work progressed. The contractors appeared to be completing the renovations with competence.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 29th March 1982. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.

Work appeared to be going ahead well but the contractors had not proved helpful in allowing Vice Chairman D. Prestage on the scaffolding to inspect the work. The Clerk was asked to press for this. Thanks to Mr. Ashby of District Council for his past help with this project were requested by the Council. The responsibility for the work on the tower was passing to another department.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 26th April 1982. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.

The work was progressing well ahead of schedule. Vice Chairman Prestage had fully inspected the work and considered that it was being well done. The local historical society were excavating the floor to see if the original flag stones could be located.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 24th May 1982. (Minute 6.3)

3. Palace Tower.

The work was nearing completion. The finishing line at roof height was peculiar and the Clerk was asked to make enquiries as to why this was so. The site had not been cleared but it was likely that the builders would return to do this.

From the minutes of Otford Parish Council 2nd August 1982. (Minute 5.2.1.)

5.2.1.Otford Palace: Correspondence between Mr. Stoyel and Sevenoaks District Council regarding the suitability of the mortar and style of pointing used in the restoration of the Palace was noted. The Parish Council did not consider itself competent to comment usefully. It was agreed to convene a meeting of the Palace Restoration Committee to discuss a scheme of maintenance for the future which might be put to the District Council.