



Sevenoaks Summer Festival

A History

to celebrate our



1970 - 2020

PART ONE – THE FIRST 40 YEARS – 1970-2010

PART TWO – THE TEN YEARS 2011-2020

Sevenoaks Summer Festival 1970 – 2010

40th Anniversary Exhibition

1. THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

In the year Sevenoaks School gave us Paean '70:

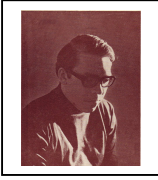
- the Sevenoaks by-pass was opened,
- Prince Philip visited the Wildfowl Trust reserve in Bradbourne Vale Road

Across the county, the country and more widely:

- Ted Heath led the Tories to victory in the General Election to become Prime Minister
- Kent won the County Championship for the first time since 1913
- Rhodesia became a republic
- Henry Cooper regained the British heavyweight boxing title
- 18 children were awarded £370,000 damages for defects caused by thalidomide
- Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull were in trouble for taking drugs
- Paul McCartney petitioned the High Court to dissolve The Beatles
- MCC cancelled South Africa's planned tour of England in response to the anti-apartheid campaign
- the great racehorse *Arkle* died and Lester Piggott riding new wonder-horse *Nijinsky* won the Derby in the fastest time since 1936, the horse's 8th win in a row
- Fires devastated Ramsgate's town centre and destroyed the pavilion on Herne Bay Pier
- West Germany beat England 3-2 to dump us out of the World Cup
- Sir Laurence Olivier was given a life peerage
- the Range Rover was launched
- Tony Jacklin became the first Briton to become US Open Golf Champion for 50 years
- Iain MacLeod, Chancellor of the Exchequer, died suddenly from a heart attack
- Dame Sybil Thorndike opened the Young Vic
- *Monty Python's Flying Circus* became the new cult TV comedy programme
- BBC Radio Medway was launched
- The first year of Ted Heath's government was hit by more days lost to strikes than any time since the general strike of 1926

With acknowledgements to Bob Ogley's "Kent: A Chronicle of The Century" Volume Three

2. 1970 – 1971: Director – Richard Hames



What we now know as Sevenoaks Summer Festival began in 1970 when, under Headmaster M.G. Hinton, Sevenoaks School upgraded its previously internal "Paean", a series of musical events inaugurated in 1968 to celebrate the end of exams, to:

Paean '70 - A Festival of Music and the Arts for Sevenoaks.

Paean's principal objective was to present as broad a range as possible of the performing and visual arts for all the people of Sevenoaks and the young in particular. Opportunities rarely offered to the public even as individual items were available as part of a varied and appealing composite programme presented at a time, the height of the summer and the end of the academic year, when the atmosphere is ideally suited for a cultural enterprise of this kind.

The school hoped that it would be the start *"of an annual event, which should eventually benefit the whole local community"*. It had three main aims:

- provide an opportunity for school children to work in conjunction with professional creative artists;
- commission works from contemporary composers for these children to perform
- produce, in the space of two weeks, a series of public concerts of the highest possible standards.

It was, they said, *"an exciting undertaking" and one that required "a great amount of energy and endurance from the participants"*. Based at the *top of town* with events at the School and in St Nicholas' Church, Paean '70 had composer Michael Tippett as its Patron. It opened on Sunday 5 July with a service at St Nicholas' Church and ran until Wednesday 15 July, closing with a concert in the Aisher Hall - *"Music of the Golden Age"*, presented by a trio that included "Honorary President & Artistic Director" Richard Hames. With a brochure of just 16 pages and costing four shillings to purchase, the programme offered an art exhibition that ran throughout the ten day period and 20 events, including concerts, the Alan Adler Memorial Concert, recitals, lectures, films (Charlie Chaplin), and, on "the Rough", a *"Summer Song Open-Air Barbecue"* - an anthology of poetry and music to celebrate the season of Summer featuring guest artists Eleanor Bron, George Macbeth, C. J. Driver and Andreas Angelakis and continuing with a barbecue at which the audience could engage with artists to a background of blue-grass and modern folk music.

Paeon 71 (*the apostrophe was dropped!!*), ran from 30 June to 11 July, expanding geographically with new venues - The Vine, the Old Bakehouse Gallery, the Odeon Cinema (now the STAG), St Luke's Church, St Mary's Church Riverhead, and Knole House - and included a "*Church Crawl*" through Ightham, Otford and Eynsford. It also featured bell-ringing, drama, Morris dancing and a Mummers play. The presentation of exhibitions was expanded to include sketches, photography, prints and weavings, and kinetics. The main theme of the Festival was British Music but the artists, including the Trio St-Severin from Paris, came from other countries as well. Also included were Dannie Abse, Vernon Scannell and Richard Rodney Bennett. This expanded Festival lost over £1,600 and an increase in the £500 support from the Arts Council of Great Britain was sought while plans for 1972 were suspended.

3. 1973 – 1980: Director - Richard Barran



By 1973, the name "Paeon" had been jettisoned, possibly due to pronunciation difficulties, and "***Sevenoaks Summer Festival***", organised by Richard Barran, ran from 7 to 11 July, beginning with an Open Day that featured a Grand Fete to provide funds for a Sports Hall Complex and to transfer the library to Johnson Hall.

There were concerts, recitals, drama - "*Macbeth*", "*The Pirates of Penzance*", exhibitions, a happening in Duke's Meadow called "*The Wild Life Park*", and an open-air concert of Jazz, Folk and Poetry. There was also a demonstration of the Art of the Butcher, by Mr G. W. Medhurst, and a display of conjuring.

The 1974 Festival- 6 to 10 July - was similar to the previous year but with a "Season" Ticket costing 30p for students and 50p for adults which gave admission to all events. The Corydon Singers and Orchestra performed at St Nicholas Church. There was a display of Kung Fu by "Mr Joseph Cheung and Students from his London Soho Club". Bob Taylor's drama students performed "*The Battle in Bossenden Wood*"; the Jaye Consort provided the musical centre-piece and "Fuzz and Friends" provided a demonstration of the delights of syncopation and swing.

Festival 1975 - 5 to 9 July - saw Geoffrey Gilbert give a demonstration of the organ, clavichord and spinet, which he had built, and the 16th century Knole organ, which he was in the process of restoring. There was a talk on directing drama for television and the theatre and the Echo Mountain Band appeared in a Jazz concert. John Cleare, a member of the 1972 Everest Expedition gave a lecture on Mountaineering Photography and Swingle II, the former Swingle Singers, gave a concert, including madrigals in St Nicholas Church.

Festival 1976 - 9 to 14 July: the Season Tickets facility was discontinued due to adverse financial circumstances. The Aisher Hall had been extended to an auditorium which could now seat 400 and Agromma - a team of Dancers from Ghana - appeared. There was a lecture on the *Decorative Arts of Islam* and Poetry Reading by Peter Porter and Alan Brownjohn. Merlin Minshall gave a talk about Ian Fleming's Bond Novels. George Malcolm, said to be "undoubtedly the greatest artist to appear at Sevenoaks in recent years", gave a concert in the Aisher Hall.

1977 - 8 to 13 July: Richard Barran was joined by Michael Proctor, an Atlee Fellow who gave help and advice. In the programme notes Barran said he was trying to provide a mixed diet to cater for as wide a range of artistic experience and interest as possible. "*A Festival after all is a kind of cultural bath to be enjoyed to the full and at leisure*". The Festival featured an excursion to Bayham Abbey Ruins and Finchcocks Manor, a Poetry Prom with Charles Tomlinson and Christopher Logue "former enfant terrible" who, among other things, was contributing to "Private Eye". William Hewison, Art Editor of Punch Magazine gave an illustrated talk about cartoon humour and Richard Rodney Bennett performed again.

1978 - 6 to 12 July – just 18 events, featuring "*The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*", staged by Bob Taylor in Hatton School's new auditorium. It also featured Chris Harris in "*Kemp's Jig*", a play about Will Kemp, who was one of twenty principal actors in the Chamberlain's Men, the company in which Shakespeare himself acted. "Cambridge Buskers" were two Cambridge graduates who could play the flute, piccolo, ocarina, penny whistle, recorder and the accordion. There was an evening of jazz, concerts, recitals, talks and Prunella Scales and Timothy West in "*On the Stage He Was Natural*", an anthology of theatrical reminiscences.

Festival 1979 - 7 to 20 July: expanded from 18 events to 27 and included a show for young children, a photographic exhibition, opera and films. Amongst the professional performers this year were Benjamin Luxon, Robert Tear, The Melos Ensemble, Professor Sir Magnus Pyke and a re-appearance by the Cambridge Buskers. Gemma Craven, Jill Martin, Eric Flynn and Stewart Pedlar featured in "*An Evening with Stephen Sondheim*".

Festival 1980 - 7 to 17 July - the last under Richard Barran's direction, saw Mark Pyper join the team as Administrator. The programme expanded to 31 events over 11 days, and a photographic exhibition, and extended to Southborough, Hildenborough and Kemsing. Celebrities appearing in 1980 included Digby Fairweather, Roger McGough, Ian Carmichael, Peter Frankl and a youthful Julian Lloyd-Webber, making the first of his several appearances in later years in the Aisher Hall. The brochure included a plea from Sevenoaks Theatre Action Group ("STAG"), encouraging audience members to support the building of a small 350-seat theatre in Sevenoaks that would also

allow further expansion of the Festival.

Referring in his book *"Sevenoaks School - a History"* to another proposal to build a theatre, Brian Scragg, talking of Head Alan Tammadge's success in persuading Staff, Governors and the School Council that a theatre should be built rather than a swimming pool, wrote:

"One of his most persuasive arguments was that a theatre would further cement the cordial relations between the School and the Town, strengthened during the seventies by the growing popularity of the Summer Festival: this, first conceived as a small internal celebration of the end of exams, had blossomed under its dynamic director, Richard Barran, into the second largest Arts Festival in the South East, attracting sponsorship from local industry, support from the Sevenoaks District Arts Council and the South East Arts Association, and enthusiastic encouragement from the local press and public. Though for many years the regular fare remained home-grown - the Adler Concert, Matthew Best's Corydon Singers and Chamber Orchestra, Bob Taylor's inventive drama productions, Fuzz and friends (Brian Townend and assorted jazz musicians), the Echo Mountain Boys - little by little Barran cast his net wider, hauling in among others Hurwitz and the Melos Ensemble, Benjamin Luxon, Robert Tear, Richard Rodney Bennett, Julian Lloyd Webber, George Malcolm, Digby Fairweather, Swingle II, Prunella Scales, Anthony Hopkins and poets Vernon Scannel, Kit Wright, Dannie Abse, Christopher Logue, Peter Porter and Alan Brownjohn. In 1978, Bob Taylor's production of Arturo Ui was staged in Hatton School's admirable new auditorium - which lent more weight to Tammadge's case."

4. 1981: Director - Michael Parslew

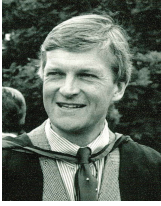


1981 - 4 to 16 July: Richard Barran left the school during 1980-81, to be succeeded as Artistic Director by Head of Drama Michael Parslew, while Registrar Mark Pyper continued as Administrator. There were now 35 events spread over 13 days.

The programme was intended to offer breadth and cater for a diversity of interests. It was still presented by Sevenoaks School but international artists, amateurs and young people could meet, share experiences, gain knowledge and understanding from each other.

They received increased support through sponsorship by a wide range of organisations, including Swiss Life and the South East Arts Association. The brochure included a drawing of the new Sackville Theatre which had just been built. The Sevenoaks School Theatre Company staged *"The Clownmaker"* by Richard Crane, a play about Diaghilev and Nijinsky. Other performers included George Melly, with John Chilton's Feetwarmers, The Lydian Orchestra, and The Berlin Symphony Orchestra. 1981 also saw the introduction of a Sevenoaks School "Fringe" Festival.

5. 1982 – 1990: Director - Mark Pyper



1982 - 5 to 14 July: Mark Pyper took over as Festival Director. Michael Parslew continued as Artistic Director and the Sackville Theatre became an additional venue. "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*" was the first production to be staged there, by Sevenoaks School Theatre Company, notable for Michael Parslew having to step in to play Theseus at the last minute; the Sevenoaks Little Company also appeared there.

This year's Festival was the largest yet, with 45 events, an exhibition (*Potter and Apprentice*) and Festival Fringe. Featured were Richard Stilgoe, Humphrey Lyttleton and his Band, Jake Thackray, Antony Hopkins, and Alan Brownjohn. The Sevenoaks School "Fringe" festival grew in size with several performances at different school venues, albeit that the programme for the last three days had to be hastily revised "because of inevitable cancellations & shortfall".

1983 - 27 June to 6 July: we have limited information about the 1983 Festival, but we know it comprised 46 events and an exhibition of silk fabric design and printing. Featured were John Lill, The English Dance Theatre, Barbara Thompson's *Paraphernalia* and Richard Baker, as well as "The *White Woman*", a narrative solo poem, presented in mime by David Glass, who was returning after his success in 1980. The School's own Theatre Company presented 'Hiawatha' and 'Terra Nova' in the Sackville Theatre, while regulars Corydon Singers gave their 10th Anniversary Concert in St Nicholas Church and Lydian Orchestra performed the opening concert in the Aisher Hall.

Of future importance, the STAG Theatre opened in Sevenoaks on 18th December 1983.

1984 - 27 June to 6 July: 55 events, 2 exhibitions and the *Fringe*, Festival '84 was also notable for:

- Peter Woodward being appointed as a second Artistic Director (for music),
- pupil Emma Johnson winning BBC *Young Musician of the Year*, causing an early sell-out of the Alan Adler Memorial Concert, (to much disappointment for its many regular patrons!),
- STAG being a Festival venue for the first time, marked by the debut of the 'Festival Players' in *The Heiress* and a special Gala evening to celebrate the opening, featuring Donald Swann,
- *Incubus Theatre* became the first professional company to appear in the Sackville Theatre, presenting *Doomsday Decameron* by Paddy Fletcher,
- the brochure recorded the names of no fewer than 384 guarantors of Festival and acknowledged the support of 28 commercial concerns who acted as sponsors.

Making a welcome re-appearance, Richard Rodney Bennett joined with Barry Tuckwell to present a wide-ranging programme of music, and the Stan Tracey Octet was the featured jazz contribution.

1985 - 26 June to 5 July: breaking away from its previous chronological presentation, the Festival brochure introduced the 36 events, 6 films (including a one hour programme for the under eights) and one exhibition by genre, and included an index in similar fashion. It is interesting to note the forerunners of today's Festival Fair in the shape of an *Open Air Extravaganza* on Dukes Meadow and Unicorn Theatre for Children's production of *Topsy Turvy*. In the Sponsorship Brochure Mark Pyper wrote: "*the Festival happens in a school, so the experience is shared by a community numbering over 1,000. The Town has always played an important role and we are fortunate to have five or six groups from Sevenoaks participating as well as several of the smaller events being led by local people. Since the Festival went public in 1978 financial support has been drawn from the local community. The bridge between town and gown has been substantially strengthened to the benefit of both. The Festival venues now comprise The Sackville Theatre, The Aisher Hall, The Little Theatre, The Johnson Library, St Nicholas Church and The Stag Theatre.*" Emma Johnson appeared again along with Georgie Fame, Peter Skellern, the Yehudi Menuhin School Orchestra, and Julian Lloyd Webber made the second of his to-be three appearances in the coming years. STAG Theatre was again prominent and the Festival Players staged *Inherit the Wind* to acclaim. Foreshadowing a future that was 15 years ahead, 1985 was also notable for the first-ever '**Sevenoaks Community Festival**', a series of largely free events organised by a committee chaired by **John Smedley** with representatives from STAG Theatre, Sevenoaks Community Association, Sevenoaks Townswomens Guild, Sevenoaks Peace Forum, Save the Children Fund and Walthamstow Hall school. It ran from 22 June to 7 July and was supported by Anglia Building Society.

1986 - 25 June to 4 July: Continuing with the presentation by genre introduced in the previous year, the 1986 brochure also contained a helpful *Diary of Events*, a list of events by date and detailing their title, time, venue and page number – no fewer than 63 events were listed – a record. Mark Pyper wrote that the arts were very healthy and that we could be embarking on the "age of leisure". West End Theatres and Concert Halls had never been fuller and Sadlers Wells had avoided closure. Commercial sponsorship of the arts was advancing in leaps and bounds. However, during 1985, the Victoria and Albert Museum had introduced voluntary admission charges and their attendance numbers had halved, and Arts Council grants were being cut. The local Sevenoaks Commercial Community had provided £15,000 of sponsorship and £6,000 of advertising revenues for the Festival. Jonathan Miller, Harvey and the Wallbangers, The National Youth Jazz Orchestra, John Amis, Chris Barber's Jazz and Blues Band and the BBC singers all made appearances, while Platforms Theatre's production of *Pleasure and Repentance* starred Annette Crosbie, Bill Homewood and Clifford Rose. Festival Players continued their triumphs at STAG Theatre with

Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. An unusual feature – under the heading *Lectures & Expeditions* – was a trip on The Bluebell Railway, with an 'en route' talk by Michael Spear – *'an insatiable railway enthusiast for the past thirty years'*.

1987 - 2 June to 3 July: Michael Parslew had retired from Sevenoaks School during 1986 and was replaced by Jim Edwards for 1987. Mark Pyper now felt that the Arts World was in a schizophrenic state of confusion because, for example, on the one hand, the West End was flourishing, Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra were thriving, and on the other, the Arts Council was making severe cuts to budgets. Per capita spending on the Arts stood at £6 a head compared to £15 in most continental countries. However the Sevenoaks Festival was thriving and this year included Julian Bream, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Choir, Donald Swann with Digby Fairweather, Jake Thackray, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Alan Price, Cristina Ortiz, Kenny Ball, Peter Barkworth, Evelyn Glennie, Lindsay String Quartet, Barbara Thompson's Paraphernalia and 1986 Young Musician of the Year, violinist Alan Brind among others. Sennockians will recall that the most vivid memories of 1987 occurred dramatically post-Festival, courtesy of "The Hurricane", which wreaked havoc in our town, devastating swathes of land and buildings, and reducing us, albeit temporarily, to "OneOak".

1988 - 21 June to 1 July: writing in the separate Sponsorship Brochure, Mark Pyper declared Festival to be *"Now well established as a regional and indeed a national event [which] has sacrificed none of its local charm or special ethos. Wings have been spread and visitors hail from far flung corners, keen to participate in and enjoy a ten day feast of culture, companionship and excitement in a flourishing town of character. Our objectives like tough sap roots are as firm as ever while our programme like seasoned leaves flourish ever more deeply and powerfully year by year. The Sevenoaks Summer Festival, enjoying the goodwill and support of the whole locality and entertaining a thousand followers each day, is an event of significance and importance."* Fractionally smaller with 57 events, Festival 1988 featured The King's Singers, Sir Hugh Casson, Michael Bentine, Frank Delaney, Pasadena Roof Orchestra, Eleanor Bron, John Amis, Lonnie Donegan, Fenella Fielding, Richard Stilgoe, Paul Merton (and his Comedy Store Players), Rory Bremner and John Sparkes - over 10,000 tickets were sold. Community groups performing included Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra, Corydon Singers (featuring former pupil Matthew Best) and The Festival Players joint production with StagTech of Lionel Bart's *Oliver*, directed by future Festival Director, Roger Woodward, costumed by future Festival Secretary Audrey Franks, and featuring a number of performers from Sevenoaks and other local schools. The School's own Theatre Company tackled Shakespeare's *Loves Labours Lost*.

A special feature was *The Gastronomic Festival* comprising three very different experiences – a Roman dinner, an Alfresco Buffet Lunch and a Festival Supper.

1989 - 18 to 29 June: with over 60 events, the Festival was now termed a "Principal National Festival" in various official listings and had been invited to join the British Arts Festival Association. The National Trust and Lord Sackville agreed to allow events in the Stone Court at Knole; there was a marked increase in the involvement of commercial concerns and a substantial number of companies were jostling to have their names linked with this flourishing annual event in Sevenoaks. Annual turnover rose to £100,000 and some 12,000 tickets were sold. Featured artistes included: The Amadeus Piano Trio, The English Chamber Orchestra, Surrey Opera, Brian Johnston, Richard Baker, Paul Merton, Foden Band, WOMAD, Syd Lawrence, Magnus Magnusson, Lenny Henry, Nola Rae, David Pyatt, Marion Montgomery and Vladimir Ashkenazy. The Band of the Royal Engineers played a rousing Grand Finale at Knole, concluding with the 1812 overture set to "breathtaking fireworks". Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra and Sevenoaks Philharmonic Choir presented a joint concert, a collaboration that is a regular feature of more recent Festivals.

1990 - 18 to 28 June: while there were 62 events to choose from, 1990 is nevertheless remembered for the headline "**Pop megastar makes unexpected Festival appearance**" when it was announced that "*An Evening with Cliff Richard*" was to be held in St Nicholas' Church.

Richard Baker, Soylent Green, Henry Cooper, Peter Sissons, WOMAD, All Electric Puppet Theatre, Emma Johnson, Acker Bilk, Humphrey Lyttleton and Helen Shapiro took part. The Band of the Royal Engineers again played the Grand Finale, at Knole, to over 1,500 people.

After ten years as Festival Director, Mark Pyper resigned to take up an appointment as Head of Gordonstoun. Festival had continued to flourish under his energetic guiding hand – this year comprised 62 events, 4 exhibitions, and a host of celebrities, so that with his going and Jim Edwards leaving for America, a new and larger team had to be built.

6. 1991 – 1994: Director – Roger Woodward



1991 - 17 to 27 June: Roger's namesake Peter continued as an Artistic Director and was joined in post by 4 colleagues - Bob White (Art), Irene McDonald and Tim Kirk (Drama) and Graham Lacey (Film) - and Hugh Pullan became Administrator.

However, despite increasing enthusiastic and much appreciated support from local businesses, Roger reported that the proportion of income from sponsorship had now sadly declined and there were "chilling breezes" in the economic climate. He returned the brochure to chronological format,

though retaining the index by genre and the summary diary of events. He introduced a "Youth Ticket Scheme", requested continued support from sponsors and took Festival further into the Community, with the Shoestring Players from the United States playing at four local halls as well as at the Aisher Hall. Over 50 students from Poland made their first appearances and the Sevenoaks Festival Chorus was the main event of the year. With no diminution in the number of events and retention of the Grand Finale in Knole – again the Royal Engineers complete with fireworks - celebrity fare included Jeffrey Archer, Surrey Opera, Jo Brand, Hattie Hayridge, Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray, Jack Dee and Richard Morton, The Ronnie Scott Quintet, WOMAD, a Choral Weekend The Festival Chorus under John Rutter with The Wells Cathedral Brass Ensemble and soloist Caroline Ashton, Paul Jones, Elaine Delmar and Keith Smith's Manhattan Club All Stars, The English Sinfonia, Richard Stilgoe and Peter Skellern, and The Haffner Wind Ensemble.

1992 - 17 to 25 June: While the programme was a little shorter, the team grew further in 1992 with the addition of John Watson as Assistant Director, Nigel Mott, Tim Kirk and Graham Lacey as Artistic Directors, and Lynne Grant as Festival Secretary. Sevenoaks County Primary School appeared, as did Sevenoaks Players who were celebrating their 70th anniversary. The "Stagepass" scheme for young people had now been introduced and was available to many theatres and concert halls throughout the country.

This year also saw the "Friends of the Festival" scheme introduced to replace the previous Guarantors scheme, but Festival remained a non-profit making organisation.

The programme included Alan Brownjohn, Donna Amato, Pam Ayres, Anthony Zerpa-Falcon, Glynn Christian and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, while Roy Hudd starred at the STAG in *The Good Old Days of Music Hall & Variety*. The now-familiar finale with fireworks at Knole again welcomed the Royal Engineers.

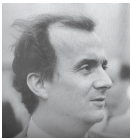
1993 - 22 June to 1 July: By now it was clear that Festival had become too large a drain on the school's resources and, although partly attributable to the temporary closure of both the STAG Theatre and St Nicholas' Church, the programme was trimmed to 35 events. Jonathan Carter was appointed Assistant Director and an Artistic Director, supported by Midge Adams. A Financial Director was also appointed, in the person of Piers Vaughan, and Swiss Life stepped up its support to become "programme sponsor", designing and printing what we now call the Festival brochure. Prunella Scales presented *An Evening with Queen Victoria*; other celebrities who appeared that year were Lee Evans, Ian Partridge, Richard Burnett, and the All Electric Puppet Theatre.

Sevenoaks District Arts Council and the District's arts community became more prominent by mounting "*Celebration '93*" in Knole Park. This in itself was a "*magnificent opportunity to show*

what the local community could do". It involved a cast of hundreds enacting the heritage of Sevenoaks through the Ages in ten scenes from Mesolithic Man to the hurricane of 1987. The play was written and directed by Diana Edwardes to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's coronation. It played for three nights in Knole Park. An usual but appreciated feature was the appearance at selected events of the newly released Sevenoaks Estate Bottled medium dry white wine, produced in the district. *Festival Friends*, who donated £10 each year, now numbered in excess of 150, and included a certain Mr N Thorne, Festival's Treasurer since 2005.

1994 - 21 to 30 June: It was now 25 years since the first Sevenoaks School Festival and it was still a unique event. Oliver Barratt and Tim Kermode joined as Artistic Directors for art and music respectively and Eileen Williams became Administrator. The STAG Theatre had been refurbished and reopened, with a programme of events that had become more adventurous and exciting. There were Festival performances from Peter Katin, Emma Johnson – returning as a professional clarinettist just ten years after being proclaimed BBC Young Musician of the Year to appear with Boris Berezovsky, The Ronnie Scott Quartet, Paul Jones and Elaine Delmar with Keith Smith's Manhattan Club All Stars also returned with a new show, *Kit and the Widow*, and Patrick Moore.

7. 1995 – 1996: Director – Jonathan Carter



1995 - 16 to 29 June: Roger Woodward 'rested' for two years and Jonathan Carter took over as Festival Director. He stressed how important it was for the Festival to become a community event.

This, he said, had been demonstrated by continued local support and goodwill. Many events were by local enthusiasts as well as concerts and productions put on by Sevenoaks School.

Town involvement went further when the Town Fair became associated with the Festival as "*Sennockian Day and Fireworks Display Evening*", promoted by Sevenoaks and District Chamber of Commerce while Swiss Life continued to sponsor the brochure and The Royal Oak Tap brewed a special Festival Ale and promoted a series of fringe events on gastronomic and artistic themes. *Chance to Dance* made its first appearance and "*While the Sun Shines*" was presented by Channel Theatre Company at the STAG Theatre. At the school, The Sackville Theatre Company contributed "*Plenty*" by David Hare and the Sackville Singers sang "*The Fairy Queen*", a version of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" written especially by conductor Anthony Dawson. Other performers included Fascinating Aida, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, Sheila Steafel, Jonathan Plowright and Michael Fish.

1996 - 18 to 27 June: Jonathan Carter said that the STAG Theatre was now providing a full and varied programme but there was still a need for a Festival where *“people can see festivals as a total experience, an opportunity to sample a whole variety of events, to sing, dance, eat, drink and have animated conversations with people they don't know. The parts make up the whole and the whole is an opportunity to taste and partake in unforeseen delights”*. STAG Theatre hosted a concert by Jools Holland and The Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Sheridan Morley, Wendy Craig, Francis Matthews and Tony Hawks also appeared.

8. 1997 – 1998: Director – Roger Woodward



1997 - 17 to 27 June: Roger returned after his 'sabbatical' to organise a much slimmed-down Festival. The emphasis had shifted to a greatly enlarged 'School's Programme' of workshops and only 29 other events.

Principal among these were *“Les Liaisons Dangereuses”* at the Sackville Theatre, Nicholas Daniel and Julius Drake, *“A Gentleman of Rome”* starring John Nettles, Margaret Wolfit and Michael Maloney, and Comedy Stand-Ups at the Aisher Hall, *“Aida”* (Surrey Opera), *“Elijah”* (local orchestra and choirs) and *“Another Chance to Dance”* at the STAG Theatre, Sackville Singers' *“Dido and Aeneas”* in Brasted Parish Church and a *Viennese Fireworks Finale* in Knole Park.

1998 - 21 June to 3 July: For this second year of his 'comeback', Roger had support from Arabella Stuart as Assistant Director and headmaster's wife Carol Cookson as Administrator. The Festival was of similar size to 1997 but combined old familiar favourites with innovations. Sevenoaks District Council supported a programme of educational events for young people to attend free of charge, and Evelyn Glennie and Sir Richard Rodney Bennett appeared at afternoon workshops for children from the area. The main programme had a Russian theme with two rising stars from the St Petersburg Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory: Maria Skriaban (violin) and Elena Porokhina (piano), who played individually in the Young Musicians' Forum and gave virtuoso performances in the *“Russian Fireworks Concert”* finale on Duke's Meadow in the school grounds, in a concerto with the specially-formed *“Festival Orchestra and Chorus”*. Other performers included: Courtney Pine Band, His Majesty's Sackbuts and Cornets, the Maryland Youth Orchestra, and Professor A D P Briggs.

9. 1999: Directors – Midge Adams and Andrew Forbes



1999 - 21 June to 1 July: Former Artistic Directors Midge Adams and Andrew Forbes took over as joint Directors, leaving Olly Barratt as sole Artistic Director for a greatly slimmed-down Festival with “America” as its theme.

There were barely a dozen events and no fireworks finale. Sackville Singers appeared again at St Martin’s Church, Brasted, and Stag Theatre contributed the James Taylor Quartet. Apart from a supper and concert at Finchcocks, the other events were held in the school’s Aisher Hall or Sackville Theatre. The archive’s copy of the brochure is a confusing and rather limited affair by comparison to its predecessors – albeit inside a glossy cover sponsored by Swiss Life, 20 copy-printed pages detailed just 12 events, including the evening at Finchcocks and the Hollow Men in a concert of all American music.

10. 2000 – 2003: Organiser – John Smedley



2000 - 18 June to 8 July: Reportedly organised by an anonymous ‘Steering Group’, the 2000 Festival reflected a significant shift as Sevenoaks School stepped back from running the Festival, though continuing to contribute events and administrative support.

Encouraged by SDAC and SDC, and with the continued commitment of Swiss Life, the late John Smedley accepted the mantle of Organiser, with transitional support from the school’s Sue Toy and, as Treasurer, Piers Vaughan. With additional support from Terry Shaw, General Manager of Stag and, working closely with Sevenoaks District Council’s Arts Development Officer, Allison Wright, and the Listening Room’s John Levett, John ensured the Festival survived, and that the Town Fair became a valued and vital part of Festival, even though, with limited funding, its celebrity content all but vanished. The mantra adopted for this transition year was “Celebrating the Arts in Sevenoaks District”. Many events were contributed by local groups and venues included Hever Castle’s Lakeside Theatre and the Barons Hall at Penshurst Place. Surrey Opera presented “*Carmen*” and Midge Adams and Andrew Forbes directed performers from the school in a memorable production of “*Fiddler on the Roof*”.

“*Sevenoaks Town Festival Day*” was a major feature on 24 June, centred on Sevenoaks High Street and the Town Centre, and including an Open Day at The Stag and the Millennium Charity Fair on the Vine Gardens. Overall there were more than 60 events over 21 days including concerts, recitals and talks. Featured artistes included Jacqueline Dankworth, Ted Walters, Diana Springall, Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra, the Syd Lawrence Orchestra, and Jeremy Taylor, while

the Stan Tracey Quartet made a welcome return, performing Stan's magical jazz suite inspired by *'Under Milk Wood'*.

2001 - 14 June to 1 July: Discarding his cloak of modesty, John was acknowledged as Organiser in this year's brochure, supported by a committee comprising Piers Vaughan, Andrew Forbes and Julien Debreuil from Sevenoaks School, and Terry Shaw and Katherine Arnsby from Stag Theatre. Billed as the 30th Summer Festival, with nearly 60 events, including the lunchtime recitals at St Luke's Church in Eardley Road, Shoreham's Midsummer Recitals and an impressive array of other venues, when Walthamstow Hall's Ship Theatre, St Julians Club, Ightham Mote, Knole Park, Bore Place, Dorton House (with the Royal Artillery Band returning to Festival), joined the familiar venues of Sevenoaks School's Sackville Theatre and Aisher Hall, Stag Theatre, Hever Castle and Penshurst Place. Appearances were made by English Youth Ballet, Morris and Friends, Charley and Hattie Webb, Fay Weldon, Harry Hill, Sheila Jordan, Humphrey Lyttleton and Helen Shapiro and Illyria presented *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Ightham Mote. The re-named "Festival Fair" now incorporated activities in Bligh's Meadow as well as the High Street and "*Chance to Dance*" continued what has become an unbroken run since 1995.

2002 - 9 June to 7 July: A public meeting organised by John in September 2001 to discuss "*the future of Festival, and to determine what support there may be for its continuation and expansion.*" revealed a crisis!! Piers Vaughan had had to step down as Treasurer and no replacement had been found. Even though he was due to retire John persuaded Terry Shaw to chair his committee and Ray Russell to take over from Piers as Treasurer. Ray introduced Festival's present Constitution as a not-for-profit organisation with election of officers and AGMs open to the public, its banking arrangements, membership structure, admission procedures and sponsorship initiatives. He also made an unsuccessful application to the Charity Commissioners for the Festival in its newly-constituted form to be accorded charitable status.

The programme, with a brochure still sponsored by Swiss Life, was very much of John's creation, while John Levett became ever more central as organiser of Festival Fair, now centred in Bligh's Meadow and the Bank Street area, with significant financial and publicity support from SDC's Arts Development Officer.

This team looked set to take Festival into a new age of development. Almost single-handedly, John Smedley had not only brought Festival back to its former level of content but also reaffirmed its place as a community event. He initiated a return of the 'Festival Flags', instigated the first 'Smartest Artists Quiz', with Pat Marsh as quizmaster, laid down the basic format of the brochure,

commissioned the present logo, designed by Anne France-Rix, and established a web-site.

The 2002 Festival lasted an ambitious four weeks and the web-site proclaimed it as *“the most extensive in [Festival’s] thirty-odd year history”* and embraced 120 events across an impressive 31 venues. The Royal Artillery Band returned to Dorton House, Don Lusher and Digby Fairweather brought *“The Best of British Jazz”* to the Stag Theatre, which also hosted Marty Wilde’s *“Born to Rock ‘n’ Roll”*, the *“Ken Dodd Happiness Show”* - the Festival’s major event, sponsored by Swiss Life, and the newly-formed Stag Theatre Company’s *“When We Are Married”*. There were more than a dozen literary events, Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival’s Prizewinners’ Concert made its debut, and, using his influence as Chairman and third trombonist, Ray provoked Second Wind into presenting what is now an annual concert at The Ship Theatre. Sevenoaks School maintained its links by reprising *“Oliver”* at the Stag, and John Levett’s *The Listening Room* contributed a number of jazz events, including Stacy Kent at the Stag and gypsy guitarist Angelo Debarre as the closing event in the school’s Aisher Hall – a forerunner of the *Festival Finale Concert*. Sevenoaks Art Club also joined in, while several performances at different venues featured Diana Edwardes’ *“A Right Royal Celebration”*. Many stalwarts re-appeared including the popular ‘sistersWebb’, Hattie and Charley. 2002 was also notable for the Committee’s first venture into promotion, described by John as *“going out on a limb”*. Artistically acclaimed, the concert by early music group The Hanover Band was financially disastrous and the three-man committee had to stump up over £2,200 between them to fund the loss.

2003 - 21 June to 20 July: The Festival again lasted four weeks, continuing the pattern of 2002, with increasing contributions from John Levett and welcome help from STAG’s Ania Jefferies. Celebrities this year included The Swingle Singers, Humphrey Lyttleton with Stacey Kent, George Melly with Digby Fairweather, Eliza Carthy, Tom Hart Dyke, Germaine Greer, Clement Freud, and a Jazz FM Concert in the Green Court at Knole House. Local groups included The Lydian Orchestra, Sevenoaks Players, Sevenoaks Philharmonic and Stag Theatre Company, while Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society featured in one of the initiatives by Festival’s *Literary Events Committee*, soon to become the separate **Sevenoaks Literary Celebration**.

11. 2004 - 2010: Organiser – John Levett



2004 - 19 June to 4 July: During planning for this 35th Festival, Terry Shaw retired, The Stag Theatre became the Sevenoaks Playhouse, Swiss Life decided to close its Sevenoaks office, and the future of the Festival was once more in doubt. John Smedley persuaded Ray to become Chairman as well as Treasurer, John Levett to broaden his role and, most importantly, Sevenoaks Town Council to step up support to become Principal Sponsor.

Ill-health limited John Smedley's involvement in the early stages of organising and his untimely death in April that year left some big shoes to fill. Fortunately, John Levett had both the appetite and the right-sized feet for the job!! Audrey Franks joined the committee as Secretary and Sally Don redesigned the brochure. To mark John Smedley's achievements, groups entering the Smartest Artists Quiz competed for the *John Smedley Challenge Cup*, and the folk concert he was planning before he died was presented as the *John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert* in his honour and established as an annual event.

Sevenoaks Chronicle agreed to increase support to become Principal Media Sponsor, Obvious Print Solutions took on printing the brochure in place of Swiss Life and Sevenoaks Tourist Information Centre provided a centralised box office for many events. Returning to a 2-week format, 47 events were presented across 22 venues. Those appearing included Carlo Curley, The Jazz FM Quintet with Tina May, Sevenoaks Philharmonic Society jointly with Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra, Rick Townend, Paul Malsom, Richard Digance and Adam Bloom. The Sevenoaks Guitar Series was reclaimed and open-air band concerts returned to the Vine bandstand.

2005 - 18 June to 3 July: The gap John Smedley left was filled by the programming creativity of John Levett, the addition of Nick Thorne as Treasurer, and the invaluable support and contributions from our partners, friends and associates. John's original brochure design was further developed and enhanced by Sally Don. A year of loss – the District Council ceased direct support, both financially (although continuing to fund Sevenoaks District Arts Council) and by withdrawing the post of Arts Development Officer for the District – but much innovation:

- a Sponsors' Lunch, instigated by the Chronicle, hosted by Royal Oak, produced significant commercial sponsorship, including for the Finale Concert featuring Julian Lloyd Webber
- a Treasure Hunt for a £500 voucher to spend in EW Payne, Jewellers
- the Grand Festival Prize Draw with donated prizes
- the Schools Music Stage sponsored by Bligh's as an augmenting feature of Festival Fair
- the introduction of Life Drawing Classes

Although with marginally fewer events and venues than the previous year, 2005 was an undoubted success and set the pattern for the years that followed – a core mix of offerings from local amateur groups spiced with special attractions and celebrity concerts, which this year were given by Dame Gillian Weir, Acoustic Triangle, Snake Davis, Bobby Lamb and the Trinity Big Band, Trevor Wye, Glenn Tilbrook, Jonathan Aitken, and the aforementioned Julian Lloyd Webber.

2006 - 17 June to 2 July: Building on foundations established in 2004 and 2005, John Levett encouraged 45 organisations to present 60 events over two weeks in 25 venues under the umbrella of ‘Sevenoaks Summer Festival’, capitalising on the proven appeal of a Festival that featured a blend of local and celebrity talent across a wide range of art genres.

Sevenoaks Town Council had maintained its grant support but now provided only 40% of the budget funding, due to the success of commercial sponsorship and other initiatives. In addition to its main grant for Festival administration, SDAC awarded a separate sum to sponsor new work. A major concern was that Sevenoaks Playhouse was in danger of closing, especially as it was hosting the Festival box office, and contingency plans were drawn up to cope with such an eventuality should it occur before the conclusion of Festival. In the event, closure was averted until after The Lydian Orchestra’s 30th Anniversary Celebration Summer Concert at the Playhouse on Sunday 2 July. The Finale Concert in the Aisher Hall featured Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, who were given a very warm and appreciative reception, while daughter Jacqui appeared at Daneby Hall and Eliza Carthy returned to play the *John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert*. Sadly, Festival marked another passing with a memorial concert held at Dorton House for Doug Revell, founder of The Blues With Bottle Club at The Anchor pub and a Festival regular – held at Dorton House. Returning as a star was Emma Johnson, to perform Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto in a special Mozart event at St Nicholas Church. Comedy drama was better represented this year with offerings from Written Voice Theatre Company and Garden Path Productions; Sevenoaks Philharmonic Society and Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra combined to produce Elgar’s *The Kingdom*, while Sevenoaks Entertainers joined up with Stag Theatre Company for a sparkling run of performances of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

2007 - 16 June to 1 July: Encouraged by continuing success, a doubling of Town Council funding, maintenance of commercial sponsorship and the addition of Kay Thorne, Lisa Whitbread and Mike Taylor to the committee’s circle of helpers, in the two weeks following its opening Festival Fair, John grew the Festival to a record 77 events in 33 venues over 14 days, with the vast majority of the leading local Performing Arts Societies and Clubs represented. Sally Don had fallen victim to a

pernicious illness, from which she's now happily recovered, and Festival was fortunate to obtain the services of Derek Griffin of DITTO as brochure designer. This was also the year that the now familiar bright red Festival Flags were introduced to complement the equally bright street banners, thanks to the support of local firms as sponsors, and an experimental Festival Reception was held at the New School at West Heath, with Gloria Hunniford as guest of honour and Waitrose providing a seemingly endless supply of wine and cheese.

The major professional events attracted big audiences – the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, the Syd Lawrence Orchestra, Roger McGough and the Finale Concert by John Williams and John Etheridge – while local groups continued to draw support - Kent Music introduced a Big Band Jazz Workshop culminating in an open rehearsal with KYJO, Written Voice and Garden Path staged three new plays, Sevenoaks Players presented an evening of Gilbert & Sullivan while Sevenoaks School Theatre Company provided a double bill of *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex*. A novel feature was *Make Mine Musicals*, celebrating the musical stage & screen, presented by Sevenoaks Entertainers in collaboration with other member groups of the newly-formed Sevenoaks Community Arts & Theatre ('SCAT'). Sevenoaks Guitar Series claimed a record 11 entries.

2008 - 21 June to 6 July: With a handful fewer events but two additional venues, including a first-ever use of Sevenoaks School's Bailey Tennis Hall in its Sennocke Centre to present folk duo Show of Hands for the John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert, Festival continued to develop and innovate, purchasing a computerised box office system for use by the TIC as the Festival Box Office. In his Organiser's Report, John highlighted that *"drama was well-represented, showcasing the talents of the young, those with learning difficulties, writers of new works, the skills of established players, and the attractions of new venues."* He elaborated as follows: *"Established pieces were presented with skill and vigour by Sevenoaks School Theatre Company's staging of 'Another Country' in the Sackville Theatre, continuing the enviable high standard achieved by the Festival's founding school, and by Sevenoaks Players' evening of one-act plays at The New School at West Heath, where Stoppard's 'The Real Inspector Hound' and Shaffer's 'Black Comedy' were presented to good effect. With thanks to SDAC for renewed sponsorship of new works, Festival was also able to present two Drama Triple Bills of works especially written or devised with the Festival in mind. First up was an evening of Comedic Plays from the pen of Glenn Willcox, staged by Garden Path Productions in Sevenoaks Library's Kaleidoscope Gallery to appreciative audiences over two nights. Each play presented different aspects of the male/female relationship in Glenn's inimitable style of humour. The other was a pot-pourri organised by Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society at The Ship*

Theatre, again over two nights and consisting of three very different pieces: one from 'CHIPS', itself a composite group drawn from Scotts Project, Pepenbury and CARE, portraying the trials, tribulations and fun of rehearsing a show with their members; the second was from the Virtual Theatre Company, a thought-provoking drama centred around the difficulties (and surprises) resulting from retirement; and the third from the Shakespeare Society, fuelling the controversy that surrounds the identity of the author of Shakespeare's works. A successful and varied set of offerings that justified our commitment to expanding this aspect of Festival."

The balance of the programme contained the familiar mix of classical concerts – instrumental and choral – popular music, open-air events, Chance to Dance and celebrity events, which, in addition to Show of Hands, this year featured 'An Audience with Peter Sallis', and the Finale Concert by the Jacques Loussier Trio. John's report also struck a sour note following the closure once again of the Stag – "Two of these shows were at the Stag Theatre, as was the professional show *Seussical* that starred Cheryl Baker. Sad to report that at the time of writing none of these shows, or the others at STAG during the Festival, have received, or are likely to receive, their ticket money, as a result of the collapse of KINO, the operators of the Stag at the time."

2009 - 20 June to 5 July: Notable for being the 40th Festival, its 40-page brochure was launched at a special pre-Festival concert in May by the Dutch Swing College Band at the Stag Theatre, once again re-opened, this time under the management of Sevenoaks Town Council. Festival was now an impressive and demanding undertaking – 87 events in 42 venues – and the committee was briefly boosted by the addition of Sevenoaks Philharmonic Society's treasurer John Lerner, who subsequently took up appointment as Deputy Chief Executive of Stag Community Arts Centre.

Other innovations included the extension of Festival Fair to the Sunday for a series of special events and activities for youngsters in Bligh's, the first-ever Sevenoaks Beer Festival, organised by Sevenoaks Lions Club, and an adult jazz workshop from Kent Music. Sevenoaks Entertainers presented an ambitious and acclaimed staging of "42nd Street", Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society joined forces with Tonbridge's Oast Theatre to present "As You Like It", an open-air production in the grounds of the White Rock Inn, Underriver, and the Lydian Orchestra dedicated its Summer Concert featuring the Sevenoaks Young Musician of the Year runners-up to the memory of its former patron Victor Clements, who had been an energetic and much-loved supporter of local arts . On the celebrity front, Clare Teal featured at Daneby Hall, Listening room presented 'Sax Appeal' and Festival itself promoted sell-out shows by Sandi Toksvig in the Aisher Hall and Elkie Brooks at the Stag, as well as concerts by Pete Long's Goodmen Orchestra, also at Stag, Kate Rusby in

Sevenoaks School's Sennocke Centre and John Lill, returning to Sevenoaks to give the Finale Concert in the Aisher Hall.

The committee had re-built Festival to its former glory and established a firm financial base that allowed it to begin planning the 40th Anniversary Festival in 2010 with confidence.

2010 - 19 June to 4 July: Planning began in late-Autumn 2009 with enthusiasm and optimism that was unexpectedly dented when Sevenoaks Town Council announced a 50% reduction in its grant to the level of 2006 and an application to the Kent Arts Investment Fund was unsuccessful. Reconciled to a probable drawing on reserves, the committee was pleased that, to an extent, STC, and in particular the Youth Council subsequently mitigated this disappointment by sponsoring a number of events aimed at the town's youth, including a ukulele workshop, jazz and rock workshops, a skateboard event and a climbing wall in Bligh's on the opening Sunday, when Trudy Kerr's 'Jazz for Juniors' will feature alongside day 2 of the Schools' Music Stage and a closing concert from KYJO. Including these, Festival presents, for the first time since 2002 (which spanned 4 weeks), over 100 events - at 35 venues across the town and beyond – a remarkable achievement. The Festival box office has returned after an absence of 3 years to Stag, which means that tickets for no fewer than 52 events or performances can be purchased from a single point of sale.

Prominent among new venues is **Pamoja Hall**, a wonderful concert hall within Sevenoaks School's newly-built Performing Arts Centre. 'Pamoja' is Swahili for 'togetherness' - perfect to describe the current Festival's collaboration with its scholarly founder to present a 40th Anniversary concert in Pamoja Hall, fittingly marked by a third appearance in Sevenoaks by acclaimed percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie. Pamoja also hosts 'An Audience with Brian Rix' and this year's Finale Concert by former 'rat pack' member and internationally renowned jazz pianist and singer, Buddy Greco.

BBC Big Band, Seth Lakeman playing the *John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert* and gypsy guitarist Lollo Meier celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Django Reinhardt complete the roll-call of celebrities appearing this year to complement and supplement the many and varied offerings from local groups, on whom Sevenoaks Summer Festival is founded and has its future.

Enjoy!!



Compiled by Ray Russell for Sevenoaks Summer Festival June, 2010

PART TWO - THE TEN YEARS 2011-2020

12. 2011 - 2020: Organiser - Ray Russell & Committee

2011 - 18 June to 3 July: involved an estimated 1,500 people helping 40 promoters/community groups to present 120 performances or 90 events in 34 venues across a range of 21 genres of the performing or visual arts. Audience or visitor support was estimated to be in the region of 15,000. Overall, a huge success, acknowledged as such. John Levett had stepped down from the Organiser's role, though continued as consultant/adviser, but Nick Thorne had resigned to be replaced by John Larner as Treasurer. The committee was further strengthened by Audrey Franks as Secretary, Mike Taylor as Schools and Youth events co-ordinator and Barbara Reade as Assistant Treasurer. By now the general format of Festival had been well-established - a community event enhanced with a selection of celebrity concerts. A larger number of Festival's own-promoted events were included in the 2011 programme to enhance the overall offerings but restricting the strain on our manpower resources by mounting them in serviced venues - STAG and Sevenoaks School's Pamoja Hall. All were well-received and sell-outs for The Manfreds and The Big Chris Barber Band together with an 80% audience for Russell Kane compensated financially for lower than expected (but nonetheless appreciative) audiences for Eduardo Niebla, Gwilym Simcock, Louise Jameson and the Finale Concert featuring Sir Richard Rodney Bennett and Claire Martin. To spread the organisational and financial load, Brandywine Music promoted our traditional John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert, this year featuring the Demon Barber Road Show. Ticket sales for this event were well below expectations and, to avoid cancellation, Festival bore the incremental cost of going ahead. Prominent among Community Group offerings, Sevenoaks Entertainers staged 'Guys And Dolls to great acclaim, as did Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society with 'Macbeth' and Sevenoaks School Theatre company who treated us to a 'promenade' through The Space for its portrayal of The Odyssey. Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra's 'Summer Classics' was well-received at Hever Castle and Sevenoaks Philharmonic Society's concert version of 'HMS Pinafore' at Stag Theatre, Sevenoaks Players' celebration of Rodgers & Hart at West Heath similarly. 2011 was also notable for appearances of FT Weekend columnist Mrs Money Penny, the late, great Frank Holder and the last separate event from the Sevenoaks Literary Celebration.

2012 - 23 June to 8 July: Festival 2012 was sandwiched between the Jubilee celebrations and the London Olympics and Paralympics, while problems with Kent Highways meant we weren't able to string our banners across the High Street and London Road, so it was perhaps not surprising to experience lower attendance at our own-promoted events and a deficit of £1,138. Local businesses' strong support of our flags ensured there was still a colourful display in the town. Carol Ashfield joined the committee to look after publicity but we were deeply saddened by Mike Taylor's untimely death on 26 July. He was manager of Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra, a promoter in his own right and a much-valued contributor to Festival over many years, securing appearances for KYJO, in concert, at workshops, in open rehearsals and on the Schools' Music Stage, an initiative he supported and stage-managed from its inception. Illness prevented his involvement this year, including his attendance at a keynote concert on 6 July at Stag Theatre where his beloved KYJO joined with NYJO for a memorable evening - one he'd conceived and organised. With support from our sponsors, we staged an impressive array of celebrity concerts, including The Glenn Miller Big Band Show, Buster plays Buster, Julie Felix, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO) and a dazzling Finale Concert by Emma Johnson. As well as the celebrity concerts, we presented two performances of Katapult Productions' musical comedy spoof on the fondly-remembered radio show 'Dick Barton, Special Agent'. Together with Buster Birch's setting of Buster Keaton's silent film 'Sherlock Jr' to a jazz accompaniment, these were two events responding to the call for 'something different'. All were

well-received and we had a near-sell-out for the Finale Concert. Community groups' support for Festival continues unabated, this year including several newcomers alongside faithful regulars. We congratulated Alison Saunders, both for organising and for achieving a full-house for the Children's Prom at Pamoja Hall, and Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society for managing to complete all eight of its outdoor performances of Romeo & Juliet, notwithstanding very mixed and occasionally unpleasant weather at the St Clere Estate. Mention should also be made of a very special concert presented at the Ship by John Levett's Listening Room, 'Shearing Magic', featuring Derek Paravacini, possibly the last jazz concert to be given by this gifted blind pianist.

2013 – 22 June to 7 July: Pleasingly we returned to surplus, albeit modest this year. We had to seek new sponsors for our familiar attractions at Festival Fair and, in particular, must thank STC for newly-supporting the Schools Music Stage and the Giant Penguins. We were pleased to secure financial support from Bligh's Meadow (via Savills) and Ten2Two for artists and activities aimed at young children, which also included Long Nose Puppets, Boom Boom's Bow and a drama workshop, all at STAG. Generous sponsorship from Waitrose Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks School, Knocker & Foskett, Specsavers, Warners and OPUS Network Services allowed us to promote an array of professional events: An Audience with Pam Ayres, Steeleye Span, Chris Dean's Syd Lawrence Orchestra, John Williams in Concert, Cubana Bop and the Finale Concert featuring Crispian Steele-Perkins backed by our Festival Orchestra. STAG Community Arts Centre once again hosted Festival Box Office and the total of 5,736 advance ticket sales marginally improved on last year's record of 5,687. Of our own promotions, Pam Ayres and John Williams sold out, Steeleye Span sold 82%, Syd Lawrence 65% but sales for Cubana Bop and Crispian Steele-Perkins were disappointingly below expectations. For other promoters, just short of 3,500 tickets were sold in advance, 2,074 for events at STAG and 1,409 for events elsewhere, both around 10% down on 2012. We continued the policy of staging Festival's own-promoted events in serviced venues – STAG and Sevenoaks School's Pamoja Hall. We were pleased that other groups made good use of Walthamstow Hall's Ship Theatre and of STAG, including Kaos Kabaret's with yet more hilarious performances of a musical comedy spoof recording of the fondly-remembered radio show '*Dick Barton, Special Agent*'. These and Phil Porter's highly-polished performances of his Charles Dickens drama '*The Brilliance in the Room*' in Sevenoaks School's Sackville Theatre, were this year's 'something different'. Community groups' events included several newcomers alongside faithful regulars. Youngsters were catered for by Chance to Dance, Bullfrog's '*Just So The Musical*', and KYJO's youth jazz workshop. Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society deserved special praise for its eight acclaimed performances of '*Much Ado About Nothing*' outdoors at the St Clere Estate. We were saddened by this being the last year of events taking place in the grounds and theatre of the RLSB's Dorton House but encouraged by the enhanced involvement of local hostelrys: The Anchor, The White Hart and The Woodman.

2014 – 21 June to 6 July: Another small surplus accrued for this, the 45th Festival, which was especially pleasing as, with assistance from KCC Councillor Margaret Crabtree's member's fund, we undertook complete replacement of the popular Festival Flags and had, for the first time, to pay for professional design services to in the production of the Festival brochure. Principal reasons for the surplus were near full-houses for four of our own promotions, the net proceeds of which, together with related sponsorship, made up for losses on other promotions, the increase in publicity costs occasioned by having to hire professional design services for our brochure and the cost of replacing flags not covered by KCC's grant. Sevenoaks Town Council continued its crucial support: a £5,000 grant towards core costs was maintained and an extra £2,950 provided for Festival Fair. STC also promoted the Armed Forces Day concert in aid of Help for Heroes and free Vine bandstand concerts on Sundays and Thursdays, when craft stalls also featured. We attracted new sponsors for our familiar attractions at Festival Fair and, in particular, must thank STC for renewing its support for the Youth Music Stage and for a special children's attraction, this year being the return of Bjorn the Polar Bear. We were pleased to

secure financial support from Bligh's Meadow (via Savills), Barracudas and Hamptons for artists and activities aimed at young children, which also included Wishworks' interactive puppet shows and a drama workshop at STAG. Generous sponsorship from Waitrose Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks School, Specsavers, and Warners allowed us to promote a series of professional events: Fascinating Aida (which was plagued by problems with the sound system), Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies, Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, Chas 'n' Dave, Snake Davis and Sir Willard White. Sevenoaks Music Club supported our new initiative to showcase 'Young Professionals' in a mini-series of three concerts, which were of the highest quality but attracted an aggregate audience of only 100, which was most disappointing. We continued the policy of staging Festival's principal own-promoted events in serviced venues – Stag and Sevenoaks School's Pamoja Hall – but chose the intimacy of Walthamstow Hall's refurbished Ship Theatre for the Young Professionals. Meeting the demand for 'something different', Kaos Kabaret returned to Sevenoaks School's Sackville Theatre for the third hilarious episode of a spoof recording of *'Dick Barton, Special Agent'* and Sevenoaks District Community Theatre in conjunction with Sevenoaks Camera Club presented an audio/visual series of *'Tales From Our Past'* in STAG's Plaza Suite. Newcomers alongside faithful regulars featured among community groups' events. Youngsters once again enjoyed Chance to Dance (in its 20th year), Bullfrog's *'Be Our Guest'*, and KYJO's youth jazz workshop. Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society staged seven acclaimed performances of *'Twelfth Night'* outdoors at the St Clere Estate, and we welcomed Riverhill House as a venue for two other Shakespeare productions.

2015 – 20 June to 5 July: Although an artistic success, the financial outcome for Festival 2015 was the worst in the recent history of Festival. What had been a pre-sponsorship surplus of just under £1,000 in 2014 became a near-£12,000 deficit, largely explained by the enforced cancellation of "That'll Be The Day" – an outlay with no return of £8,800. Sponsorship revenue was also a casualty of that cancellation, which, regrettably, lay at the door of Stag Theatre. With thanks to sponsors Bentley Kent, Berry & Lamberts, Ibbett Moseley, Knocker & Foskett, Sevenoaks School and Warners, professional events that were staged included: Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames, A Night Of Country Music featuring Ward Thomas (a first venture into this genre), Harry The Piano, and Emma Johnson. Although lacking sponsorship, we also featured concerts by Paul Lacey's 'Back To Basie' big band, folk musicians Kevin Dempsey & Rosie Carson and BBC Young Musicians Matilda Lloyd and Sophie Westbrooke, comedy & song from John Shuttleworth and comedy-drama from Louise Jameson & Nigel Fairs.

2016 – 18 June to 3 July: We had all but finished our planning for this year before we learned that our dispute over the cancellation of *'That'll Be The Day'* last year had been settled without legal action and before a new Treasurer had come forward along with two new helpers to swell our skimpy circle of volunteers – a warm welcome was extended to Simon Harris, Ray Leathers and John Power. As was foreshadowed in 2015, our programme of 'own events' had been trimmed so as to be manageable in relation to what we thought would be our financial and human resources. Notwithstanding spending less on fewer events, we experienced higher revenues and, by maintaining the level of sponsorship, achieved an overall surplus on these events sufficient to offset the net cost of Festival Fair and the shortfall of other income to cover other expenditure. Consequently, we reported a modest overall operating surplus, which, plus the recovery of our 2015 losses on TBTD meant that our reserves were restored to their pre-2015 levels. Feedback confirmed that Festival 2016 was an artistic success. The spread of our own events ranged from puppet shows through Country Music (the Haley Sisters), comedy (Gyles Brandreth, world-class guitar (Martin Taylor), exemplary folk music (Show of Hands), and light operatic (Sir Willard White) to sublime pianist and raconteur Rick Wakeman, who gave a tremendous concert to a sell-out Finale audience, while Show Of Hands were terrific at the John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert. We welcomed Bligh's Meadow as a Major Sponsor, replacing United House, allowing us to maintain the standard of events and activities at Festival Fair. Community groups' support for Festival continued, again including several

newcomers. For youngsters, we included Chance to Dance, 'Bullfrog On Tour' and KYJO's youth jazz workshop . In the drama category, Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society presented 'The Comedy Of Errors' outdoors at Underriver's White Rock Inn, often under difficult weather conditions, and we welcomed Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve as a promoter with its offering of 'Gulliver's Travels' by the Pantaloons Theatre Company.

2017 – 24 June to 9 July: Feedback confirmed that Festival 2017 was an artistic success. Our own events ranged from puppet shows through Country Music from The Alan West Trio, Folk from The Demon Barbers, a return of 'Buster Plays Buster', Buster Birch's jazz accompaniment to Buster Keaton's silent film 'Steamboat Bill Jr', Paul Lacey's 'Back To Basie' big band and Daniel Taylor's brilliant tribute to Tommy Cooper, to sublime pianist Michel Legrand and a return of The Manfreds, who gave a tremendous sell-out Finale Concert while The Demon Barbers presented a terrific John Smedley Folk Memorial Concert. Community groups retained their place at the heart of Festival and their participation this year was as strong as ever with offerings of drama, comedy, dance, film, choral & classical music. Chance to Dance was now in its 23rd year and KYJO again welcomed aspiring young musicians to its youth jazz workshop. Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society again experienced difficult weather conditions for its performances of 'Macbeth' outdoors at Underriver's White Rock Inn and, showing its versatility, SSS also reprised to acclaim its Drama Festival musical entry 'The Bard With A Beat'. Events on the Vine were a major feature, with Colourscape a popular attraction of the opening Festival Fair, band concerts each Sunday afternoon and Thursday evening, Morris dancing on the middle Saturday and Vinefest (formerly Beer on the Vine), organised jointly by Sevenoaks Lions and The Vine Cricket Club on the final weekend. Unfortunately, the artistic success was not matched by the financial outcome - expenditure exceeded revenue by more than £7,500, explained by a fall in both sponsorship and audiences.

2018 – 23 June to 8 July: We trimmed our advertising and own events budget for 2018 in light of the 2017 result and were delighted that 2018 generated a surplus of nearly £5,000, largely as a result of increased ticket sales. Once again, Festival 2018 was judged an artistic success, with the range of our own events covering Puppet Shows, Folk Music from Cara Dillon, The Big Chris Barber Band, FB Pocket Orchestra with its take on 1920s ragtime and popular dance music, Julian Marc Stringle's '*It's Clazzical*' with his Dream Band Quintet, 'Jane Austen At Home' – a dramatised recital/performance of her words, a wonderful evening with Henry Blofeld and a sublime sell-out Finale Concert featuring Lesley Garrett and Emma Johnson. Community groups' strong participation this year meant offerings of drama, comedy, dance, film, choral, jazz, blues & classical music, including regulars Chance to Dance and KYJO's youth jazz workshop. Stag Theatre Company repeated its successful formula of 'Two Comedies, Two Courses', while Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society presented '*The Tempest*' outdoors at Underriver's White Rock Inn. We were especially pleased to welcome four newcomers: Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees and its international guitar concert in aid of Syrian refugees; SingingNation's choir performing their Summer Concert; Romshed Farms '*The Soil Never Sleeps*' and Bosville Valley Stompers' Sunday Summertime Stomp. Events on the Vine once again featured Colourscape, band concerts on selected Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings, and Sevenoaks Lions and The Vine Cricket Club's Vinefest.

2019 – 22 June to 7 July: Promoted as the 50th Festival, we welcomed the return of Rick Wakeman to delight a Finale Concert full house and cabaret pianist Harry The Piano as the selected event for our Festival Reception. Generally, we experienced good audiences, including nearly 3,000 whose tickets were booked online through TicketSource, which hosted our Festival Box office. Our own promotions of attractions and professional events and concerts once again comprised Puppet Shows and Colourscape with this year's special performances being

Renaissance Choral Music from the Tallis Scholars, Pentangle's Jacqui McShee & Friends for The John Smedley Folk Memorial concert , Big Band from Len Phillips accompanied by Clare Teal, an historical talk from David Starkey, Harry The Piano's Cabaret Piano and a wonderful evening with Rick Wakeman at a sublime sell-out Finale Concert. The cost of this year's six events increased by 20% over 2018's seven, reflecting our aim to 'push the boat out a little' for our 50th Festival. Ticket prices were largely maintained at last year's levels but sales value was higher. This was considered encouraging, given the reduction in number of our own events, albeit partially offset by an increase in overall publicity expenditure. Community groups confirmed their place at the heart of Festival with offerings of drama, comedy, dance, film, choral, jazz, blues & classical music, including Chance to Dance celebrating its 25th year and KYJO's youth jazz workshop. Drama once again included Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society's outdoor offering of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. We were pleased to include Sevenoaks Society's Heritage Exhibition and the Martin Salisbury Memorial Concert, and to welcome back The Great Comp Music Festival and newcomers Sevenoaks Ramblers and Weald Heights Care Home. Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees repeated last year's successful international guitar concert in aid of Syrian refugees. Familiar events were held on the Vine - Colourscape and our Art Tent in the opening Festival Fair, band concerts on selected Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings and Armed Forces Day organised by Sevenoaks Town Council.

2020 – 20 June to 5 July: As we look forward to our 50th Anniversary, our programme of professional concerts is almost complete and we await applications to participate from Community Groups to begin compiling the brochure. Treats in store to celebrate this landmark include Elkie Brooks returning after her sell-out appearance in 2009, the Grimethorpe Colliery Brass Band (remember 'Brassed Off'?) and an Evening with David Gower. We're proud to have inherited Sevenoaks School's mantle and, with the school's current partnership collaboration and generous financial assistance from our commercial sponsors and, especially, Sevenoaks Town Council, we've maintained and nurtured this wonderful annual event in the Town's calendar.



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