

Oakley Carnival 2007

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The carnival is a happening in Oakley every two years and so far each time it seems to get bigger and better.

All carnivals have started the day before the main event with a quiz night at the Village Hall. This year we had a new quizmaster, Steve Nicholas. I managed get out of being a member of a team, which can vary from four to eight people. This was fortunate for me because I had few clues at the last event and apparently the questions were more difficult this time. For me the most enjoyable highlight of the evening was a superb chilli con carne made by Steve – a man of many talents.

Quiz winners were: 'The Magnificent Seven' with 68 points. Second was 'Just the Four of Us' and third 'Seven Deadly Sins'. There were not many points between the winner and the two teams that tied at the bottom with 48 points.

We have experienced the wettest July on record. Brenda Barnes writes: 'Wow! We were so lucky to have a lovely sunny day for the carnival. The morning started a bit overcast and windy, but by the time I went down to Lincroft School to get on the Brownie float the sun was shining and it just continued into the evening.'

'The procession started on time and for those who took part was fun. But it seems to have come down to younger people and mostly girls who belong to groups in the village, who take part. Although they don't mind getting wet from water pistols, they get upset when they are the target of super soaks, large water bombs, buckets of water and hosepipes. In future the committee will ask that water is banned. So a challenge to all the youths and sports groups and boys organisations – put your energies into making a float and not making others very wet and cold. It would be good to have you take part.'

For each carnival there is a theme and this year it was countries of the world. There were

only four floats this time. First prize went to the Brownies' Dutch float titled the 'Windmill Art Gallery'. The girls were in Dutch traditional costume and the sides of the float were covered with 'Dutch' artworks painted by the Brownies with the help of a Brownie mum, Lesley Crawford. A week later these were auctioned to help Brownie funds.

Second prize went to Lincroft School, their float depicted India. The two other floats were the Parish Council's America and the Guering family's Greece.

You don't have to have a float to win a prize at Oakley Carnival, the third procession prize went to the Mad Hatters who were walking, and illustrating Wonderland. Other groups walking in the procession were the Playgroup, and the Rainbows.

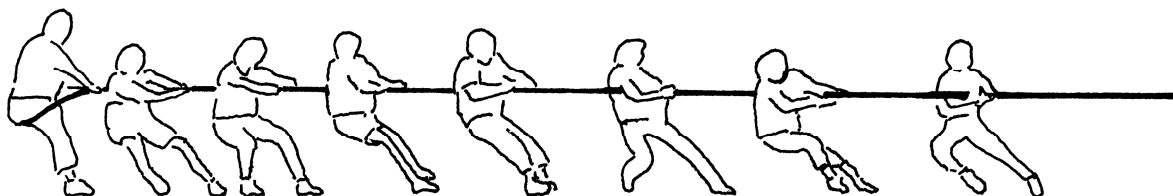
The parade also included the Carnival King Sam Woods and Queen Francesca Smith chauffeured by Vince, Brian Craddock's son-in-law.

Oakley Motorcycle Club put on a dramatic prelude to the procession with about 50 bikes making a couple of circuits of the route. Of course they were too fast for the procession and had to take off for a spin on the Clapham by-pass before parking at the recreation field.

Not all the procession was home grown. No procession would appeal to the watching crowds if there was not a band. This was handsomely provided by the Bedford Scottish Bagpipe Band. There were also the Shefford Majorettes, and four Indian dancers. Our favourite clown Smarty Arty kept the crowds entertained during the procession and for the rest of the day.

At the recreation field there were more stalls from local organisations and outsiders than ever. Men and boys looked with envy at the motorbikes and cars on display.

Animal Encounters was a very popular place in the marquee for children and their parents.



There were all sorts of unusual animals including snakes, which could be handled.

In the arena there was plenty to see: Tae Kwon Do display; Oakley Lower School dance display (the children had been taught by Sharnbrook Upper School students); Bedford Prison Officers dog display; Mad Hatters; tug of war; children's races; Power Dance Academy's dance display; the Grand Raffle and the final tug of war.

Winners of the tug of war competition were men: The Bedford Arms' Big Boys. Ladies: Pink Ladies. There was also a team, which at first sight looked like some very beefy girls, but in fact were the Recreation Club's pool team in drag.

Probably there is a far better chance of winning something in the Oakley Grand Raffle than the National Lottery, as there were 22 prizes. The first prize was a £110 electrical voucher donated by Michael R Peters. Second prize was a £100 travel voucher given by Allen Sturges, third was a voucher for £85 from Sporting Targets.

At the far end of the arena was a family dog show organised by Roma. There were eight different classes ranging from 'Children's handling' to 'The dog or bitch the judge would most like to take home.' Best in show was a puppy who was in training to assist the disabled with Canine Partners in Clapham.

The scarecrow competition took place on carnival day and the following day. All 15 entries represented various countries of the world, and could be seen standing or sitting in front of houses around the village.

The favourite scarecrow representing Italy, was by J Davies and could be seen at 27 Raines Drive. Each scarecrow had a puzzle attached, which when solved was a name of a country. There were two prizes; one for children under 16, won by Beth and Luke McFarlane, and the adult prize went to Jane Walker.

Among the distinguished visitors to the carnival was a delegation from Rovego Town Council in Italy, where they are in the process of twinning with Bedford.

Some of the food available continued the carnival theme: curries supplied by Oakley Post

Office and Tony's Italian ice cream. The ladies netball team did a barbeque, and there were very English cream teas supplied by the Playgroup.

Security this year was the best ever and this success would seem be due to a good police presence mostly represented by PCSOs as well as security men circulating the field.

The carnival could not survive without help from many people, but thanks are specially due to the hardworking carnival committee who start planning for the next one in about six months time: Brenda Barnes (chairwoman), Lynsey Dazly, Sandra Robertson, Alyn Walker, Steve Nicholas, Sue Cunnington, Elli White, Pat Olney and Nichola Ansell.

MAD HATTERS TEA PARTY

Most of the Mad Hatters gathered at Lincroft School for the judging of the floats. We came third and Jim was very chuffed with the result. We walked a fair distance and then stopped for a cake, biscuit and a drink, then waited for the procession to come round again, and joined in. I carried the banner with Dorrie Hartley at the front of our little procession, and we walked up to the carnival itself.

It was a bit of a rush, but we managed to get ourselves dressed in time for the performance, and a little practice at the scout hut. Some of us had to do a dance a few minutes before the Mad Hatters, so we had to be quick.

The narrators told the story, taking it in turns at the microphone to say their lines. The main characters acted out the story. There was the Mad Hatter, Alice, the Cheshire Cat, Dormouse and Rabbit having a tea party. Then I joined in as the Queen of Hearts and there was a King and all the cards. We did a dance to some music. We finished with a song.

All the narrators got their words right, the actors remembered what to do, and most of all, all the people that run the group were there to support us.

Me and my brother Ben really enjoyed performing in the Oakley Carnival, and I'm sure the other children did too.

