

# HOTHFIELD NEWS



## Dates for your Diary

Hothfield Parish Council next meeting 7pm Wednesday 14 Feb at the Bluebells Centre

Arts Society Egerton 2.30pm Wed Feb Egerton Millennium Hall

Ashford Invicta Singers 7.30pm Sat 16 March St Marys Church Willesborough

The hardy volunteers started back on 4 January, while the volunteer livestock checkers never stopped, turning out every day including Christmas. Leaky dams now built along the stream running from the Lakeside end should retain more water on the reserve in the increasingly dry summers, while allowing the stream to run. The water table is currently so high that holes for fence posts fill as soon as dug. The pigs, Hazel and Beech, have ploughed through more of their enclosure. Birds spotted by mid-January include redwings and lapwings, while garden escapee snowdrops were showing and hazel catkins weren't far behind. Gorse carries on flowering all winter.

February brings the first glimmerings of lesser celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria*, while the last wisps of traveller's joy seed-heads, *Clematis vitalba*, still festoon the A20/Cade Road junction. So the buttercup family bring the year full circle, these two species being in that, the *Ranunculaceae* family. *Ranus* is Latin for frog, *unculus* a Latin diminutive, giving *ranunculus*, little frog, just as the Latin diminutive of *rete*, a net, became *réticule* for a small bag in French and just lost the acute accent in English.



Botanist Alex Lockton's 2022 report, *The Flora and Vegetation of Hothfield Heath*, shows that the buttercup family, which also includes delphiniums, aconites, love in a mist, hellebores, anemones, columbines, paeonies and meadow rues, has a strong presence on the reserve, reflecting its varied habitats, dry and soggy. After celandines and before traveller's joy, come wood anemone, *Anemone nemorosa*, an axiophyte - a plant that strongly indicates a habitat of conservation importance - of ancient woodland. Then kingcup or marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, in the leaky dam stream, an axiophyte of wet woodland and alder carr.

There are four buttercups: bulbous, *Ranunculus bulbosus*, meadow, *R. acris*, creeping, *R. repens*. and celery-leaved, *R. sceleratus*. Lesser Spearwort *R. flammula*, found in all the bogs and pools, is a wetland axiophyte and is on the Kent Rare Plant Register. 'Perhaps most significant for the reserve,' writes Lockton, 'is three-lobed crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus*: a Nationally Rare plant of pools and muddy hollows in heathlands in southern and western Britain and discovered on Hothfield in 1994. At Hothfield it occurs in a pool at the bottom of the main bog and in a good year in several wet hollows in bog 3. It is reasonably abundant.'

*R. tripartitus* is a wetland axiophyte and is on the Kent Rare Plant Register, rarest of the water crowfoots, considered to be of great significance wherever it occurs. A very low growing and diminutive annual or perennial, it flowers April – June, flowers are no more than 10 mm across, white with a yellow base. There may be some fine feathery submerged leaves whose large surface maximises photosynthesis but offer little resistance to flowing water, with flat three-lobed leaves floating on the water. It likes small muddy pools, rutted tracks and gateways, needs high levels of moisture and light, low levels of nutrients, tolerates fluctuating levels of water. Happy to float or to root in mud, it likes some disturbance of the soil/peat, so all the grazing, trampling and clearance work on site will be to its benefit.



The *Ranunculaceae* occupy the first four plates of W Keble Martin's 1965 *Concise British Flora in Colour*, plate 2 shows 14 species and sub-species of water crowfoots. He worked on the book for sixty years, and only painted from life. There is a record that he found *R. tripartitus* on Devon moorland in 1934 although the chapter in his autobiography for 1934, his first and very busy year as an impecunious vicar at Great Torrington, doesn't mention it. Keble Martin was 88 when, with the support of the Duke of Edinburgh, his flora was published, and he died just four years later. Having persuaded my school to let me do O-level botany alongside the non-science A-levels they had imposed on me, I bought my treasured 5th edition in February 1968 for 35 shillings, with Christmas and birthday money. Researching this article has brought Plate 2 (*R. tripartitus* second from top left) alive again. **Margery Thomas**

Thank-you to everybody for your patience and understanding during the contractor work this winter. Please don't be put off visiting. Suitable footwear is still essential at this time of year; if there is mud on the path, please walk through it and not round it, to protect the fragile path verges. The accessible Triangle Trail (enter from the reserve car park) has an excellent quality surface that is usable by buggies and wheelchairs, no matter how bad the weather.

Please keep dogs close to you at all times, do not let your dog run and play off the paths and through the areas of heather and gorse. Make sure anything you bring with you leaves the reserve with you. Remove litter, dog mess and place all dog bags in the bins as all these items have a detrimental effect on the wildlife. Hothfield Heathlands is first and foremost a haven for wildlife and one of the best spots for wildlife in the county; with your help we can keep it that way. To find out ways you can support our work, please visit our website <https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

**Ian Rickards, Area Manager, Kent Wildlife Trust**

# Hothfield Parish Council

For full minutes of meetings of Hothfield Parish Council, please either see the noticeboard outside the village shop, or visit [www.hothfield.org.uk](http://www.hothfield.org.uk)  
PLEASE NOTE: The email address for the Parish Council is [parish.clerk@hothfield.org.uk](mailto:parish.clerk@hothfield.org.uk)

## Charing Scout Group

The cold clear evenings of January have given us the opportunity to work on the astronomy badge. Standing outside in -4degrees may not seem like fun, but the pure joy of seeing constellations and planets makes it all worthwhile.

We are delighted to welcome some new leaders to share the fun and adventure. We would really like to have more volunteers. If you'd like to try it out for a couple of weeks please get in touch.

Terry Group Scout Leader 07748818660

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## Art Group

There is a small group that meets twice a month on Monday afternoons in Westwell Village Hall.

We enjoy painting, drawing etc, together with a cup of tea and a chat.

If anyone is interested in joining us, please contact Penny Sutcliffe on 01233 634191 for more details.

## Hothfield Village Hall

Bookings via [www.hothfieldvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.hothfieldvillagehall.co.uk)

### Regular weekly events

Mondays @ 16:30

Target Shooting School  
[www.targetshootingsschool.co.uk/ashford](http://www.targetshootingsschool.co.uk/ashford)

Tuesdays @ 19:00

Bowls Club

Contact: John 07492 862974

Wednesdays @ 17.30

Koba Dog Training

Contact: justine@kobadogtraining.co.uk

Thursdays @ 18.30

Bowls Club

Fridays @ 18.30

Contact: John 07492 862974

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## CARS • HGV • BIKES



In December's newsletter I reported that the Ashford International Model Railway Education Centre (AIMREC), based at Bethersden, is running exhibitions across Ashford in April to celebrate 140 years of the railway line between Maidstone East and Ashford. That line included a station, built in Westwell, but called 'Hothfield'. Towards the end of its life the station wasn't used much and was downgraded to a 'Halt' but it retained a Station Master's house and toilets until a nearby bomb damaged the main building. It was taken completely out of use in 1959 by which time Lord Hothfield had sold most of his estate, including the grand manor house, and so he wasn't using the station.



The station had been used by the locals and also by the WWII soldiers based at the army camps across Hothfield who were being trained and preparing for war. The station was unmanned at weekends and during the night so the soldiers returning from a night out in Ashford could sometimes travel back from the town without buying a ticket.

Occasionally pictures of the station appear on on-line auction sites along with train tickets and luggage labels that refer to Hothfield. Curiously some train tickets, such as this one from 1928 for a journey from Dover to Maidstone, refer to 'via Hothfield'. If Hothfield was such a small and insignificant station then why mention it on long-distance tickets? We think that because there were two railway lines heading west from Ashford (one via Charing and the other via Pluck-

ley) then the tickets clarified that the journey was via Hothfield as being the first station west of Ashford – I guess that passengers at Ashford station needed to check that the train was going through Hothfield to ensure that they were on the right line to reach Maidstone or other destinations.

Most railway stations had their own sidings for collecting and delivering goods, and many along the Ashford to Maidstone line still have them or remnants of their old sidings today. They all had cattle docks and these were sometimes known as 'cattle sidings' where local farmers could load their livestock to take to market in Ashford, Maidstone or maybe even to send goods further afield like London or Dover. Ashford West station had a Cattle Inspectors Office. Traditionally milk was collected from farmers along the line on the early morning train and taken to London for the population there, giving rise the name for the early train as the 'milk train'. Hothfield's sidings and a goods shed also served a roadstone and tarmac plant with wagons of stone, and of tar being shunted into the plant. There were sets of points to allow trains to swap from one line to the other and Hothfield's station had its own signal box so that these trains could be managed on and off the main line. The signal box lasted long after the station was demolished, but the current sidings are now controlled from Ashford.



The station buildings themselves were located on the 'down' side of the station, on the platform bound for Ashford. This is also true of Charing and Pluckley, so presumably customers in the early days mainly travelled to their nearest big town. Customers at Hothfield and Charing stations could wait in the ticket hall for their trains to Ashford, but if you were going to Maidstone or London then there was little shelter on the other side of the station. So I wonder what did Lord Hothfield do each time he went to his big house in London (or even travelled via London to other parts of his vast estates like Appleby)? The later Lords spent more time in London (and elsewhere) than in the manor at Hothfield. Surely he and his family and staff wouldn't have waited on the open southern platform exposed to the weather? I wonder if the train was swapped to the other side of the station as it approached from Ashford, collected the party, and then swapped tracks back onto the 'up' line after he got on board?



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# THE GRANARY SPA

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The Granary Spa is passionate about supporting local fellow small businesses wherever possible.

During the festive season we had our first professional photographs taken by the very talented and kind Collette (**Lettie P Photography**). We were delighted with them.

We have also had some beautiful floral arrangements made for the spa by Hanna (**Hanna's Flowers**). They certainly brought colour, joy and scent into our day. We always love to chat with our wonderful guests and thank you for commenting on and enjoying the floral displays. More will come soon I am sure!

And did you know... in our relaxation lounge we have **The Kent Life Magazine** which tells you all the magical things happening in Kent. Next time you are at the spa, have a read!

Enjoy. Love, Georgia x

## HOTHFIELD POST OFFICE STORES

Sunday	0900 To 1200		Post Office closed
Monday	0900 To 1300	1400 To 1800	Post Office closes 1730
Tuesday	0900 To 1300		
Wednesday	0900 To 1300	1400 To 1800	Post Office closes 1730
Thursday	0900 To 1300	1400 To 1800	Post Office closes 1730
Friday	0900 To 1300	1400 To 1800	Post Office closes 1730
Saturday	0900 To 1300	1400 To 1800	Post Office closes 1230

## Sheila's Homemade Jam: Damson with Damson Gin

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💻 [hothfieldhoney@outlook.com](mailto:hothfieldhoney@outlook.com)



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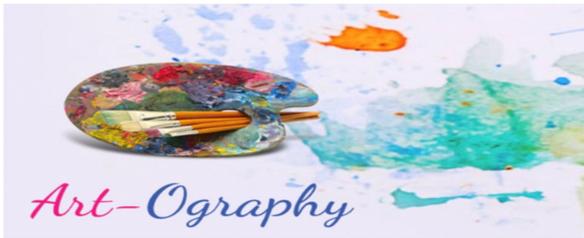
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## February 2024 In The Vineyard



Happy New Year from Nine Oaks! A little bit late as this is the February newsletter, but having taken a few months away from our regular column here we thought we'd start again with quite a full update of what we got up to in the last few months of 2023 and where we are taking the vineyard in 2024.



As soon as we finished harvesting in October we were straight into the Christmas build up, and it was an incredibly busy first festive season for us, with events taking us all over Kent from the Wealden Times Midwinter Fair in Paddock Wood to Rochester Castle's Christmas Market. We loved getting out and about and sharing our wines with so many people.

The vineyard itself is looking quite peaceful at the moment, as the vines are still dormant. Martyn is working his way through pruning, which is a key job to set up the growth for the next season's grapes and is a huge undertaking now all three hectares will be fully cropping. The cold snap has been quite welcome, keeping the vines asleep a bit longer. Our big concern soon will be a spell of warmer weather leading the vines to wake up and start budding while there is still a real risk of frost!



In our busy run up to Christmas we sold out of our Pinot Noir Rosé – an exciting milestone for us. We will very shortly find out the bottling and launch dates for the 2023 vintages, with more Rosé likely to come in late March/early April along with our first release Bacchus, with the Chardonnay following around July after spending a little bit more time oak aging. Also in July, we are eagerly anticipating the launch of our very first sparkling wine, the produce of our very first small harvest of grapes back in 2021! We have no doubt it will be worth the wait – but it has been a very long time!

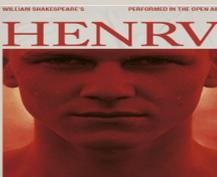
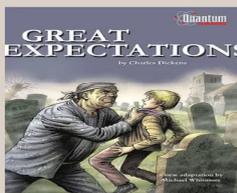


Across the Summer we are again excited to welcome some of the UK's most popular open-air theatre companies to Nine Oaks, with a programme combining family and traditional theatrical productions, so hopefully there will be something for everyone. Booking is now open at [www.nine-oaks.co.uk](http://www.nine-oaks.co.uk).

We had a wonderful year in 2023, featuring our first wines, an epic harvest and a fantastic first Christmas. We are so excited to see what 2024 has in store and look forward to sharing it with Hothfield.

**Helen Matheson-Pollock**  
Co-founder, Nine Oaks Vineyard

### Summer 2024 at Nine Oaks Vineyard



#### L Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Sunday 19th May 3.00pm

#### Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Sunday 19th May, 7.00pm

#### Beatrix Potter's *Jemima Puddle Duck*

Saturday 27th July 3.00pm

#### Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*

Saturday 27th July 7.00pm

#### William Shakespeare's *Henry V*

Thursday 15th August 7.30pm

For more information and to book tickets visit [www.nine-oaks.co.uk](http://www.nine-oaks.co.uk)

# Saint Margaret's Church

For weddings, baptisms, etc. contact the Parish Office [calehillpcc@gmail.com](mailto:calehillpcc@gmail.com) 07395 910317

Rector: Rev. Sandra Marsh The Vicarage Pett Lane Charing Kent TN27 0DL Phone: 01233 713996 email: [revsandramarsh@btinternet.com](mailto:revsandramarsh@btinternet.com)

## Services in February

Sunday 4th 11.00am The Eucharist

Sunday 18th 11.00am BCP Matins

For services in our other churches, see [www.calehill-westwell.uk](http://www.calehill-westwell.uk)

## Ashford Invicta Singers

An Evening Of Popular Music in support of Friends of William Harvey Hospital

**Saturday 16 March 2024 7.30pm**

St Marys Church, Willesborough TN24 0YR

Tickets £10 (inc refreshments) Buy from Friends of WHH Shop 07751 993824/07513 591122

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## THE ARTS SOCIETY EGERTON

*The Arts Society brings people together through a shared curiosity for the arts*



We meet at Egerton Millennium Hall on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.30 p.m. (doors open from 2.00). Our next lecture will be:

**Wednesday 14th February at 2.30 p.m.**

### THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK

This lecture goes behind the scenes to tell the story of the last 150 years and of the School's changing fortunes.

*Our lecturer is Susan Kay-Williams, Chief Executive of the Royal School of Needlework, Fellow of the Royal School of Arts, the Chartered Institute of Marketing and of the Society of Dyers and Colourists.*



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See also our website [www.theartsocietyegerton.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietyegerton.org.uk)

## HOTHFIELD NEWS

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