

HOHFIELD NEWS



Dates for your Diary

Hothfield Parish Council next meeting 7pm Wednesday 13 March at the Bluebells Centre

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

Dear neighbours. From the beginning of March until the end of August, we will be asking again for owners to keep dogs on leads across all the open areas of Hothfield Heathlands (grassland, heather, scrub). This is a legal requirement for anyone visiting Open Access land such as Hothfield Common.



With national declines in our wildlife and increased numbers of visitors, we need to ensure there is still space for our wildlife to survive alongside us. Dogs off leads are one of the biggest causes of wildlife disturbance. Ground nesting birds are particularly at risk, with 66% of these species in decline in the UK.

Keeping dogs on short leads will benefit other wildlife that can be harmed or disturbed by enthusiastic canines – from snakes to mammals to amphibians. It also prevents problems with dogs chasing grazing livestock. Dogs can remain off lead (under control) through mature wooded areas, around the perimeter of the reserve. Birds nesting in wooded areas are less sensitive to dog disturbance. The decline in wildlife across our country is reaching catastrophic levels, with your help we can make a difference to wildlife on our doorstep. Thank-you to everyone for helping us to protect and support our wildlife.

For more information: <https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/reserves-team/dogs-our-reserves#:~:text=The%20law%20also%20says%20that,our%20reserves%20include%20access%20land>

MARCH ON HOTHFIELD HEATHLANDS

The pigs Hazel and Beech have left the reserve, leaving a large section of the boggy area below the concrete causeway nicely churned up. We wait to see what germinates from the seedbank in the puddled peaty soil. Elsewhere on damp banks and woodland edges, the first of the buttercup family on the reserve is flowering. The glossy yellow petals of Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* only open in sunshine, held in a parabola to reflect the sun inwards, raising the temperature in the bowl of the flower, a boon for early-flying insects seeking the pollen and nectar provided. Gardeners know that every bulbil at the base of the plant can grow into a new plant and botanist Alex Lockton has identified the subspecies *verna* in one location on the reserve, with bulbils developing in the leaf-axils just to help spread it even more quickly. The heart-shaped glossy leaves are rich in vitamin C so were used against scurvy. The entire plant withers above ground as stronger plants and tree cover cut out the essential sunlight, food stored in the bulbils for its early appearance next year. *Ficaria* derives from *ficus*, fig-shaped. Wordsworth wrote three poems about lesser celandine, and sent a pressed sample to Scottish zoologist Adam White from a sunny slope within a few yards of my house which I call *Celandine Bank* it is so richly starred with that favourite plant of mine. The celandine carved on Wordsworth's memorial in Grasmere church looks more like a greater celandine, *Chelidonium majus* in the poppy family, although the sculptor Thomas Woolner denied that.

In scrub just a few inches above these low-growing shining stars it's already nesting time for birds such as dunnock, wren and whitethroat. The dunnock, *Prunella modularis*, is an inconspicuous solitary all-year resident the size of a robin, a warbler with a gentle jingling song and a *tseep* that can become an alarm call. It forages for insects, spiders and worms shuffling along close to the ground, adding seeds and berries to its winter diet. The quiet plumage of browns, black and grey provides good camouflage against predators, and is subtly tweedy seen close-up. Known as hedge sparrows to many, they can be distinguished from the distantly related sparrows by their thin pointed bill, notched tail, habit of keep low to the ground, never feeding on bird tables, and frequent wing flicks



Some overwintering continental dunnocks will leave soon, while low courting flights and aerial chases with quivering wings start here. Females will mate with more than one male, and more than one nest may be built, low in bracken or shrubs, flattish made of twigs, grass and moss, the shallow cup lined with hair or wool. Two or three clutches of unmarked blue eggs are incubated between April and June; possibly from several males, who may help feed the broods. Sparrowhawks and cats predate the adults and cuckoos favour dunnock nests, cuckoo nestlings pushing dunnock chicks out while accepting food from dunnock parents.

Dunnocks are the only lowland member of the Accentor genus. The old English *dun-* brown, + *-ock*, small means 'little brown bird' and the German name, *Braunelle*, is also a diminutive of brown. The easily interchangeable 'p' and 'b' resulted in *Prunella*; *modularis* means 'singing'. Although common, numbers declined by nearly a third from the 1970s, rebuilding slowly since the 1990s, so they are of conservation concern with amber conservation status.

Throughout spring and summer, all birds nesting low down are highly vulnerable to disturbance by dogs running around and sticking noses into bramble and scrub, as are all the ground-nesting birds such as willow warblers, yellowhammers, chiffchaffs, tree pipit (who nest on the ground), linnets and we hope eventually the Dartford warbler and nightjar.

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
PLEASE NOTE: The email address for the Parish Council is parish.clerk@hothfield.org.uk

Charing Scout Group

Beavers have had a very busy month. We are delighted to welcome Bubbles as a new leader. The leadership team is going really well but are always looking for more help. Yet another beaver has been awarded the Chief Scout Bronze Award. Well done Noah!

Cubs are having a fabulous term. While our leader Bagheera is watching whales in the Pacific Ocean, cubs have been working out how many cubs you can get in a hammock in a wood in the dark in the middle of a wood. We are working out the details for cub camp in the spring.

Scouts, as usual, are out and about as much as possible. They are working on their photographer badge too. If you're as old as I am you'd be amazed at how you can achieve this badge. March means Spring and we can't wait to get out and about and doing proper scouting.

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

Regular weekly events

Mondays @ 16:30

Target Shooting School
www.targetshootingschool.co.uk/ashford

Tuesdays @ 19:00

Bowls Club

Contact: John 07492 862974

Wednesdays @ 17.30

Koba Dog Training

Contact: justine@kobadogtraining.co.uk

Fridays @ 18.30

Bowls Club

Contact: John 07492 862974

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Long-standing resident Penny Sutcliffe has kindly donated historic Village Newsletters to the village's archive, along with some posters and programmes from carnivals. The newsletters and posters are from 1977 to 1983 and give us a snapshot of what was happening in the village almost 50 years ago. In those days there was still a school and a pub, and carnivals were annual events coupled with a fete and a dance in the evening. And we had our own troop of Majorettes, the Hothfield Eaglettes who would lead the parade.

We had a Carnival Queen, Janet Luckhurst, in 1977, and her two attendants (Karen Willis and Joyce Cook), chosen at an evening of dance and food. They had their own float and they went with the Majorettes to carnivals and events in Ashford and other villages as well as appearing at different occasions in Hothfield. The Carnival Queen opened the village flower and produce show which also included a handicraft show – there seems to have been lots of entries across a very wide range of classes and categories for fruit, vegetables, flowers, home-made crafts, with plenty of prizes to be won.



Hothfield was also represented at various events by its choir, the Hothfield Singers, who put on their own performances in the village, sung at other events such as the fetes and carnivals, and who went to other villages to put on choral concerts. It seems that the church were also putting together a choir of young people, despite small congregations even in those days. If that wasn't enough, there was also an Operatic and Amateur Dramatic Society who also put on and staged pantomimes and plays in the Village Hall (which was still a fairly new building in 1977).

Not only was there the 'Merry and Bright' that we still have today, there were two football teams (the football pitch was at the top end of Cades Road), an angling club, WI (who sang carols) and a playgroup. The youth had their own

barn to meet in. Each club and society provided news in the Newsletter along with reports from the Parish Council. The school seemed to have a lot going on including a cheese and wine evening, an Easter Bonnet competition, trips out; but a knobbly knees competition seemed to generate controversy and it was proposed to have a most beautiful knees – in the end the prize was given to the youngest entrant in the Fancy Dress competition. Different groups in the village organised a barn dance, a folk dance, as well as a Country and Western Dance put on by the Hothfield Supper Committee, and a pram race. Did the villagers find time to rest?

Some things don't seem to have changed – in 1977 there was a problem with stray dogs and litter; and a Hothfield Common Management Committee were looking for volunteers to help remove birch saplings in order to help the heather to grow.

Railway Exhibition opens 25th March to 27th April

An exhibition of 140 years of the railway between Ashford and Maidstone East opens this month at the Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford. Entry is free and it's open Mon-Fri between 9am and 5pm, and on Saturdays 9am to 3pm. Go along to find out about Ashford West station and the history of stations along the line. Their display will also cover some of Hothfield's past including the Manor house and the Lords that lived there, and the Nissen Hut camp.

The Ashford Festival of Railway Modelling is also spread across various other venues on 6th and 7th April, but if you want to see the display about Hothfield's historic station then get along to Ashford Gateway Plus. For more information visit: www.aimrec.co.uk

Also, Steve Beck from Charing and District Local History Society will be launching his own book on the history of the line at this event to mark 140years of Charing station. His book will be £7.50 available at the event or from the Charing Local History Society from late March.



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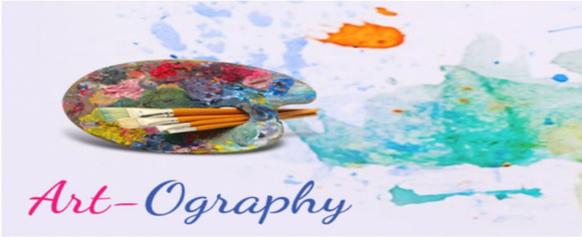
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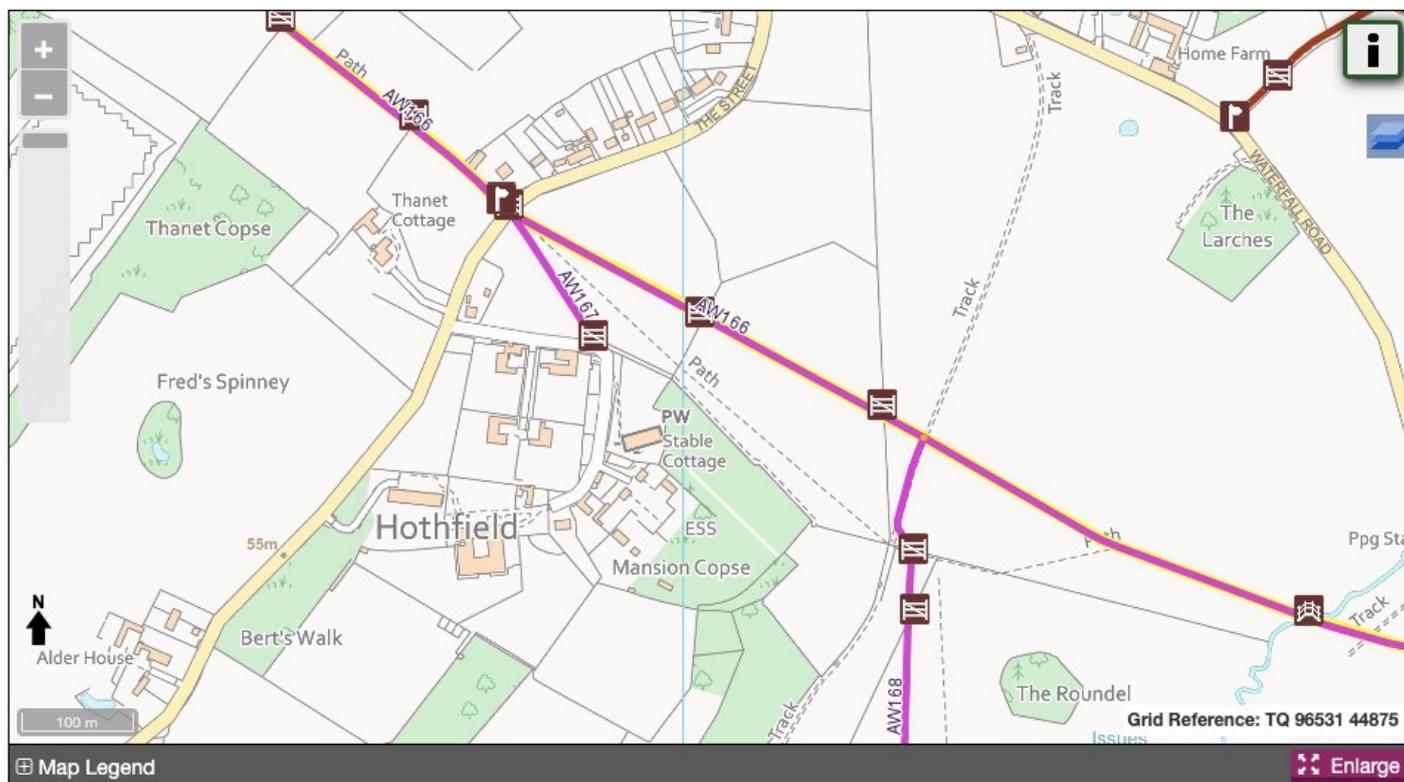
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Nine Oaks Vineyard – PROW (AW166/167)

Over the past few years, we have communicated periodically regarding the two Public Rights of Way (PROW) that run across and through the vineyard (AW166 and AW167). In the establishment phase of the vineyard, we had been happy for people to walk around the vines for convenience. However, with more farm activity and more machinery movement in the vineyard, there is increased risk to walkers moving freely around the vineyard and therefore we are now going to mandate the usage of the two public rights of way.

In January we had a meeting with the KCC PROWs Officer, and we agreed some measures to help ensure people are aware of the correct footpaths. These measures in-



clude erecting new PROW markers, new signage and the fencing of AW167 (AW167 is the path which runs from Church Lane to The Street).

We aim to have these new measures in place by the 1st April and we would ask that walkers kindly adhere to the following:

- Use only one of the three designated entrances/exits to the vineyard (gates at the ends of AW166/ AW167).
- Use AW166/167 when transiting through the vineyard.
- Dog walkers to ensure their dog stays with them on the PROW (on a lead if necessary) to ensure dogs do not roam freely amongst the vines – dog mess does not make for good wine!
- Refrain from using the farm gate on Church Lane (whether it is open or shut). This gate is for farm access and is regularly used by vehicles.
- Refrain from walking around the vineyard or through the vineyard alleyways.

We appreciate that some older maps show the Greensands Way running along the Western boundary of the vineyard, however, this is incorrect. The accompanying map taken directly from the KCC PROW page shows the correct location of AW166 and AW167, which are the only PROWs on the vineyard. Ordnance Survey have also recognised the same error and will be making amendments in their next map update.

We do sincerely want people to enjoy the vineyard and we really do appreciate the great support shown by the village and walkers who regularly use the footpaths. We ask that people respect the points detailed above and work with us to create a safe and enjoyable environment for all.

Please do drop us a line if you have any further questions at info@nine-oaks.co.uk

Saint Margaret's Church

For weddings, baptisms, etc. contact the Parish Office calehillpcc@gmail.com 07395 910317

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

Services in March

Sunday 3rd 11.00am The Eucharist

Sunday 17th 11.00am BCP Matins

Sunday 31st 11.00am Family Eucharist

For services in our other churches, see 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

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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 13th March at 2.30 p.m. THE MEN WHO MADE MENSWEAR



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Our lecturer is **Russell Nash**, actor, writer, puppeteer and theatre maker for 15 years. He is a London Blue Badge Guide and regularly guides the major galleries and museums in London such as the National Gallery, Tate Modern and Tate Britain, and the British Museum.

Visitors are always very welcome at £6, refunded if you join. For further information please contact Christine Willis, our Membership Secretary via cmwillis75@gmail.com or 01233 756377.

See also our website www.theartsocietyegerton.org.uk



HOTHFIELD NEWS

is edited by Ian Lloyd and financed and published by Hothfield Parish Council. Email: ian.lloyd@hothfield.org.uk
Letters and articles for publication are always welcome, deadline for inclusion is 20th Monthly. Advertising is free to businesses working in, or for, the Parish of Hothfield. Email the Editor for information on advertising prices for outside companies.