



## Dates for your Diary

Hothfield Parish Council next meeting 7pm 12th March

Hothfield Village Hall

Arts Society Egerton 2.30pm 11th March—see page 7

Friends of St Margarets Church AGM 7pm 23rd March—see page 5

It's all happening, and unlike February, this month you can see and hear the signs, including the welcome trickling of water thanks to leaky dams and, yes, an awful lot of rain, so the squelch of mud on paths as well. Birds are calling, to defend territory, attract a mate, claim their space in roosts or just celebrate the dawn. The yaffle of the green woodpecker carries right across the reserve. Weather permitting, butterflies will be emerging from hibernation, peacocks and small tortoiseshell from late February, brimstone, comma and red admiral through March.



I spied the first dandelion in mid-February; the gorse, *Ulex europaeus*, is of course still flowering, and celandine and sallow catkins are appearing. The heather or ling, *Calluna vulgaris*, still looks dark and lifeless but looking closely there are new shoots of tiny overlapping scale-like leaves, soft and bright green, clustered below the upper woody stems still holding last year's papery flowers. The new shoots will bear this year's flowers at their tips. It's the upper surfaces of the older leaves that are very dark green, a protection against the elements through winter. Turn these older sprigs over and even the backs of these leaves are now fresh green. The leaf margins on mature leaves are rolled back (revolute) which protects the underside in tough weather conditions. Ling is intolerant of nutrient-rich soil, so the thin layer of sandy soil here is ideal, there is little humus to hold nutrients

so they drain away quickly. The challenge now is that in recent summers the soil has dried out badly, shortening the flowering period, reducing the nectar flow for insects with plants at risk of dying. Ling is an ever-green subshrub, the leaves persisting several years before dropping and adding to the thin leaf litter below. It is the only heather with the leaves arranged oppositely rather than in whorls (eg *Erica tetralix* in the damper ground) or alternately, so it is not classified in the *Erica* genus.

The volunteers work on the reserve regularly, as well as on various sites across Ashford. Areas that they have cleared of trees and shrubs close to existing ling colonies are showing very positive results, with ling seedlings developing well, for example on the slope north of the main bog and on the side of the 'new' wooden boardwalk. Ling spreads vegetatively, stems lying on the ground growing adventitious roots. The miniscule seed is dispersed further afield by the wind. With trees no longer sucking up the water, it's very pleasing to see the boggy puddles and pools that have formed in these cleared areas, increasing the habitat of one of the key plants that makes this reserve so significant.

May the sun shine on walkers, volunteers and early butterflies this month.

Margery Thomas

### DOGS ON LEADS

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 this reserve.

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 increased numbers of visitors to the reserve, we need to ensure there is still space for our wildlife to survive alongside us. 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>

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)

## Video Door Cameras

Following a wonderful response we will be ordering Ring Doorbells for those residents who have registered and will confirm a collection date in our next Newsletter.

## Scouts 1st Charing

Our beavers have had a busy start to the term. We have 5 new Beavers. They had great fun with science experiments. They have also made pizzas and popsicle cakes (not one of the science experiments!). A very wet Saturday was spent at Wild Wood, but a great time was had by all. Beavers are working towards the KSS (Kent, Sussex and Surrey) Air ambulance challenge badge. We are holding a coffee morning at the scout hall on Sat May 7th to raise money for KSS so support for this would be great.

The highlight so far for Cubs was an evening in the woods in the dark. We were lucky that this was one of the very few dry evenings. They followed trails, found glow in the dark letters to make words, sent morse code messages and, of course, cooked marshmallows over the fire.

One of our scouts, Charlotte, has very long hair. She is having it cut off for the Little Princess Trust who make wigs for children with various medical conditions. She is being sponsored for this. If you would like to contribute to this wonderful cause this is the link: <https://justgiving.com/page/charlotte-chop-for-charity>

Explorers continue to make us proud. They have won the District quiz. Well done!

*Terry—Group Scout Leader—07748 818660*

## Hothfield Village Hall

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

### Regular weekly events

Mondays @ 16:30

Target Shooting School  
[www.targetshootingschool.co.uk/ashford](http://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](mailto:jus-tine@kobadogtraining.co.uk)

Thursdays @ 10.30am

Dance Visions Zumba  
Contact: [bookwhen.com/dancevisions](http://bookwhen.com/dancevisions)

Fridays @ 18.30

Bowls Club  
Contact: John 07492 862974

## Hothfield Village Hall (KCHFT Health Visiting Team)

Tuesday Drop-in Session Weekly 9.30am to 12.30pm

These breastfeeding drop-in sessions are supportive, social, and welcome all pregnant and breastfeeding women and their families, including partners. Trained Breastfeeding Champions from the local Health Visiting Teams will be able to provide information and help if you have a breastfeeding concern. Get more information and support for parenting under-fives at [www.kentcht.nhs.uk/kent-baby](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/kent-baby)

## Lead Tags found at Hothfield – what are they?



At the history exhibition last September John Coles kindly displayed a small part of his collection of coins and other items that have been found on the former parkland of Hothfield Place. The grounds of the former manor have revealed an interesting range of metal objects as well as bottles and similar relics of its past. Among John's finds are a number of tags or labels made of lead. These are mostly rectangular or triangular with a hole at the top, and several have old rusty nails through their holes. Most of these tags have a number or a letter stamped into them, and the nail suggests that these were fixed to a post or maybe a barrel. Local resident Neil also brought along similar tags together with some much bigger lead labels. His labels clearly state words like "Cowslip wine", "Whit wine" (with an 'e' missing), and "WH:WINE" but with the 'N' stamped the wrong way round. These were surely pinned to barrels or to shelves where wine was being stored or brewed. One label states 'brewed October 1691'. Most of these were found on the former parkland not far from where the last manor stood – maybe there was a brewery or winery there? Neil's labels have dates from the late 1600's and 1700's so these are very old and presumably the brewery had gone by the time the manor was built.



There are a lot of oast houses in Hothfield and the nearby area, and so in the past we were clearly part of the hop-growing industry that covered most of Kent. My own theory is that the simple lead tags were labels for the end of each row of hop bines, nailed to the first post rather like there are for numbers on the rows of grape vines today. I haven't yet found anything like this on the internet so if you know what these tags were used for then please let me know: [hothfieldmemories@hotmail.com](mailto:hothfieldmemories@hotmail.com). We've ruled out ear-tags for cattle or dog tags as they wouldn't have been fixed to the animal with an iron nail!

I'm grateful to John, who has since passed away, and other contributors who kindly brought along items for us to see and to display at the exhibition for everyone to enjoy on the day. I'm privileged that John showed me so much of his collection and told me stories of his life at Hothfield, and chatted to many visitors at the exhibition only a few months before sadly passing away.

## Free talk – Medieval history of Hothfield

Local historian and author Kaye Sowden has been researching the history of Little Chart and other local villages during Medieval times, and will be giving a talk in a few months. Please watch this space for the date and details.

The medieval period was from the mid 400's AD to the late 1400's, and we don't know much about Hothfield in that time. The church has some parts that are thought to be 13th Century, and possible Saxon origins (400's AD up to 1066). There have also been Roman finds, so we're fairly

sure that there was a village or settlement of some sort on the fertile land around what is now Hothfield, and indeed most of Kent was inhabited or farmed one way or another. The Reverend Russell could not reliably distinguish the numerous historic variations of the spelling of Hothfield from references to Heathfield and Hatfield in Yorkshire, and so reports of places with a variety of spellings cannot be definitely separated from those places with similar names. By the time of the Domesday book (around 1086) more clear records of a place that can be identified as Hothfield is more certain, and again in 1253/54.

I look forward to hearing what Kaye has unearthed.

## Friends of St Margarets Church Hothfield

The Friends will be holding their AGM @ 7pm on Monday 23rd March in the Church. Tea/Coffee will be served.

This is an opportunity to learn more about the purpose of Friends and the sort of activities they are involved with.

Anyone who is interested is welcome to join the Friends as a trustee at this meeting.

Penny Sutcliffe

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# HOTHFIELD POST

## OFFICE

### New Opening

### Hours

### 0700—1900

### 7days

## Have your say on the Future Structure of Councils in Kent and Medway

Government ministers have launched a public consultation on how local government should be organised across Kent and Medway. This forms part of a national programme called Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which explores the creation of unitary councils. Each unitary council would deliver the full range of local government services in their geographical area.

Under the current system, Kent County Council (KCC) provides services such as education, social care and highways, while district and borough councils are responsible for areas including waste collection and housing. Medway already operates as a unitary council.

As part of this consultation, councils in Kent and Medway have submitted a series of potential options. These options set out how many unitary councils might be created and what areas they would cover.

You can view all the proposals submitted to Government for Kent and Medway here: [Local Government Reorganisation Consultation - Kent Council Leaders](#)

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### KCC's Submitted Position

Kent County Council has put forward a proposal for a single unitary authority - the Kent Council - designed to simplify local government, strengthen services, and deliver better value for residents.

The Kent Council model would replace all existing councils with one authority supported by three Area Assemblies - North, East and West Kent - ensuring decisions on community services remain locally grounded.

Key benefits include:

- Financial sustainability: £69m annual savings, £99m transition cost (much lower than any other of the options for Kent and Medway), and payback in just 3.3 years – unlocking £457m cumulative savings over 10 years.
- Service resilience: Maintains countywide delivery of critical services, avoiding the risks and costs of splitting them into multiple councils.
- Fairness: One council tax rate, consistent services, and shared resources across Kent and Medway.
- Local responsiveness: Area Assemblies will shape community services like libraries and Family Hubs to meet local needs.
- Enhanced community engagement: Stronger partnerships with local people and places to keep communities represented and involved.
- Strategic leadership: One strong voice for Kent and Medway with government and partners, supporting growth and infrastructure planning.
- Identity: Keeps Kent as a whole county preserving its unique and historic identity Linden Kemkaran, Leader of Kent County Council, said: "This consultation is an important moment for everyone in Kent and Medway. "As part of this consultation, we have set out clear evidence showing why a single Kent Council would provide the most stable and effective way of delivering services for the people of Kent and Medway. Our analysis indicates that this model offers the strongest financial position, protects vital countywide services, and avoids the risks and extra costs linked to breaking them apart. "While it is important that residents consider all options, we believe the Kent Council proposal represents the most workable and sustainable solution for the long term. I encourage everyone to look at all the evidence and share their views so that the final decision reflects what is best for our communities both now and in the future."

### Other Options

Other councils in Kent and Medway have submitted alternative options - including models involving three, four or five unitary councils - supported by their own evidence bases. Full details of all the options are included in the material available for consideration.

### How to Take Part

- Background materials - including evidence for all proposed options and submissions from each council - are available at: Local Government Reorganisation Consultation - Kent Council Leaders
- To participate in the Government's consultation, visit: Local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway - GOV.UK.
- Deadline for responses: 26 March 2026.

Some councils may contact residents and organisations separately to explain the evidence underpinning their own preferred options.

### Next Steps

After the consultation closes on the 26 March 2026, Government officials and ministers will review all responses alongside the technical evidence. A decision is expected in the summer of 2026.

# THE ARTS SOCIETY EGERTON



Wednesday 11th March:

## VISUAL PROVERBS: DUTCH GENRE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

presented by Hilary Williams, Art History Education Officer at the British Museum



2.30 pm (doors open from 2.00) at Egerton Millennium Hall, Elm Close TN27 9DS

Visitors are always very welcome at £8 (just turn up and pay on the door), refunded if you join.

For further information please contact Christine Willis, our Membership Secretary via [cmwillis75@gmail.com](mailto:cmwillis75@gmail.com) or 01233 756377. See also our website

[www.theartssocietyegerton.org.uk](http://www.theartssocietyegerton.org.uk)

## Educational Grants

Uniform



Scouts Subs



Dance



Sporting Activities



Travel



School trips



University



If you live in Hothfield and think that Hothfield Educational Foundation could help with your children's education, or know of someone else who could benefit, please do contact us via [HothfieldEducation@gmail.com](mailto:HothfieldEducation@gmail.com)

# 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 March  
Sunday 1st 11.00am The Eucharist

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

## GARDENING IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH!

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## SHIFT HAPPENS

### DRIVING TUITION

Paul 07703 685143

[www.shifthappensdrivingtuition.co.uk](http://www.shifthappensdrivingtuition.co.uk)

### 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 NEWS

is edited by Ian Lloyd and financed and published by Hothfield Parish Council. Email: [ian.lloyd@hothfield.org.uk](mailto:ian.lloyd@hothfield.org.uk)  
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