

HOTHFIELD NEWS

BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY NUMBER 2 FEB 2026

This edition is available at www.hothfield.org.uk



Dates for your Diary

Hothfield Parish Council next meeting 7pm 12th Feb

Hothfield Village Hall

Arts Society Egerton 2.30pm 11th Feb (see page 7)

Pluckley Quiz Night 7pm Friday 27th Feb (see page 5)

If December was a merry berry month for humans celebrating mid-winter festivities, January and February are serious berry months for birds and mammals aiming to survive winter. Many native trees and shrubs on the reserve serve as a vital larder of berries through these tough times, having already provided food in the form of pollen, nectar, tender leaves or bark as well as shelter to a myriad of wildlife. Berries provide vitamins and fibre for birds when insects, grubs and larvae are scarce. For blackbirds, redwings, fieldfares, song and mistle thrushes, they are the main source of winter food while sparrows and finches prefer seeds and tits prefer fat. Starlings will eat pretty much anything, Thrushes and waxwings prefer berries with smaller seeds, like rowan, as they tend to only eat the flesh of the berry. Hawfinches eat the seed itself, so are attracted to berries with big seeds such as hawthorn, blackthorn and cherries. Hedgehogs, badgers, mice, squirrels and foxes will happily munch on berries.



Berries are defined as small globular or ovate juicy fruits enclosing seeds rather than a stone. The skin colour and scent of the flesh attract attention so they are eaten and, usually, the seeds excreted, thus helping distribute new plants. The shiny juicy berries of late summer and early autumn have thin skins, and quickly disappear before the onset of real winter, either eaten, gathered or rotted by rain or frost. On the Reserve's menu are wild cherries, *Prunus avium*, blackberries *Rubus fruticosus*, elderberries *Sambucus nigra*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, Rowan, *Sorbus aucuparia*, a twenty-first century arrival probably thanks to birds, and even raspberries, *Rubus idaeus* which botanist Alex Lockton found still here having been recorded since 1829.

Now only berries with thicker skins persist and glimmer on bare branches or amid shiny evergreen foliage. The haws of the hawthorn, *Crataegus monogyna*, and berries of the holly *Ilex aquifolium* will remain well into the new year, unless migrant fieldfares and redwings arrived hungry from Scandinavia and stripped them, chattering the while.

Yew, *Taxus baccata*, one of our three native conifers along with juniper and Scots pine, is dioecious, like the holly. It bears male and female cones on different trees, the female cone a warm red fleshy aril covering just one seed. Birds know to eat the aril and excrete the poisonous seed. The tight little berries of the blackthorn, *Prunus spinosa* need frosts to make them palatable. The hips of the dog-rose, *Rosa canina*, are too large for birds smaller than a blackbird, and are also often left until frost has softened them. Ivy, *Hedera helix*, produced its intoxicating flowers late so berries, themselves mildly toxic, only ripen now and may be left until the hungry month of February.

Now's the ideal time to plant a bare-root berry-bearing tree or shrub in the garden or hedge to provide wild food next January.

Food, glorious food - it's 'Christmas party day'
Our band of hard-working and very hardy volunteers continues to grow and they reported that on their 'Hothfield festival' in mid-December 'about 20 people enjoyed lots of hard work clearing brash and tree trunks around the pond. Lots of lovely food (bring and share) and the weather was kind this year.'



New volunteers are always welcome and always made to feel very welcome, with training and guidance and no pressure to turn up every time or take on tasks you would prefer not to do. Lots of information is available here <https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering-opportunities>

If you haven't yet explored this very special place, make 2026 the year you get to know it.

Margery Thomas

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

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.



This has been an amazing term. All of our sections have had programmes packed with fun, challenges, teamwork and fun. This month I'm concentrating on two of our sections and promise to redress the balance next month.

I have to start with our explorers. We have started thinking about fundraising to support Perla who has been chosen to represent Ashford at the next World Scout Jamboree in Poland. They finished term with a show which demonstrated great individual performance, amazing teamwork and a fabulous sense of fun. It is so good to see two more of them become adults and join their sections as adult leaders.

Then there's cubs. What an end to the term! We started with total chaos which resulted in stunning Christmas table decorations. We then had food, games, food, songs, food, fizzy drinks then more food. We then said goodbye to Rocky as a young leader and sang happy birthday as she returns next term as an adult leader. Happy Birthday Ellen.

We then said goodbye to three cubs who are moving up to scouts and were welcomed into the troop by Debbie. We will be following your progress..

Finally we presented Mila with her Chief Scout's Silver Award. This is a great achievement requiring lots of self motivation and dedication. Well done Mila. We are very proud of you.

Happy New Year everyone. We can't wait for 2026

Terry Group Scout Leader 07748818660

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

Thursdays @ 10.30am

Dance Visions Zumba
Contact: bookwhen.com/dancevisions

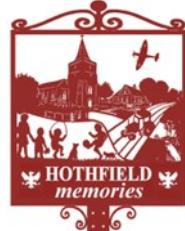
Fridays @ 18.30

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.kentchft.nhs.uk/kent-baby



It was with great sadness that we learned of the sudden passing of John Coles, a long-standing and well-known resident of this village since his childhood. John had come to the village in 1949 where his father rented the estate's farm from Lord Hothfield. Then known as 'Park Farm' the land extended past the front of the manor and beyond. John and his father were later able to buy the farm from Sir Reginald Rootes, and bred ducks, among other things.

As a boy John and his friends knew a way into the empty Hothfield manor, left uninhabited after WWII, and it was their playground with cellars and tunnels. John remembered his father filling in army practice trenches left behind from the military occupation of the area.

In the 1960s John took part in road rallies around Marden (no longer legal) and won one of them despite losing their route map and time-clock. At one time John grew and sold Christmas trees – two of which are still growing very tall behind the farmhouse.

As well as keeping turkeys, pheasants, cows, sheep, and growing crops, John supplied ducks to Abu Dhabi and made a couple of visits out there to check the future home of the birds. The story was published in the Daily Mail in 1973 describing how the Sheik built special lakes at his Buxted Park home in Sussex and another in his dessert. John helped to advise on specialist submerged shelters and floating rafts, and systems to protect the ducks from predators. The Sheik visited Hothfield where he offered to buy one of John and Pat's daughters in exchange for camels.

John also supplied pheasants for the making of the original Darling Buds of May filmed near Pluckley, teaching Catherine Zeta-Jones how to handle the chicks and ducks for Rosie and Jim.

Over the decades John and his father have employed hundreds of local people. Current and past residents often mention that they have worked for John at some time in their life. Until a few years ago John rented a couple of fields that are still owned by the current Lord Hothfield, referring to the Lord and his son by their first names.

John was a founding member of Hothfield History Society and latterly its Treasurer, for which we are so grateful. Last September at our history exhibition John displayed some of the coins and items found on the fields of the former Manor and chatted to many of the visitors.

I'm privileged to have been one of the many people to have spent time with John, his wife Pat and daughters, and to have learned a lot about the history of the village from him.

John and Pat, and previously John's parents, have always been generous supporters of the village happily providing a field for fetes and events, and supporting many local groups, and were members of numerous local groups. Pat continues to support local charities and community events in Hothfield and Ashford.

John is being sorely missed and we're very grateful for his kindness, generosity and support for the village and its activities over many decades.

Messages and tributes to John can be left at: <https://john-richardeimer-coles.muchloved.com/>

Chris Rogers

Friends of St Margarets Church Hothfield

We are a small group of Hothfield residents who currently arrange events throughout the year in order to raise money to support our beautiful old church.

Amongst the items we have paid for in recent years are the kitchen area at the back of the church, and the toilet. We were also able to contribute towards the cost of the new heating system in the church during the past year.

We are looking to enlarge our committee, and would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining us. If you need any further information about the Friends, please do call me on 01233 634191

Penny Sutcliffe

Pluckley PTFA presents

Quiz Night

Pluckley Village Hall

Friday 27th Feb 7pm for 7.30pm

£5 per person—Teams up to 6 people

Cash Bar & Nibbles

Raffle

To book: pluckleyptfa@gmail.com

Celebration Cakes for all occasions
including Weddings

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cupcakes, Brownies, Blondies,
chunky cookies and personalised
biscuits

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Facebook - Flossy's Fussy Bakes
Whatsapp/text - 07769 228842



HOTHFIELD POST OFFICE

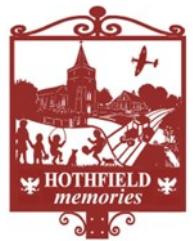
New Opening

Hours

0700—1900

7 days

Antique Tufton Court Cupboard saved



In early 2015 volunteers of the History Society went to see a large wooden sideboard, or dresser, known as a Court Cupboard, which was owned by the Tufton family and made in 1632 which was then at the Ringlestone Inn near Sittingbourne. It stood behind the bar and was part of the pub's equipment complete with cash register, tankards and all manner of paperwork but the Landlord at the time was happy for us to have a close look at it and to take photographs. He seemed very proud of it.

It's a magnificently carved sideboard dated 1632 and belonged to John Tufton 2nd Earl of Thanet. It's presumed that the sideboard was once in the grand mansion at Hothfield and is thought to have been in the pub since the 1930s. We believe that it is made from oak.



horses across the sea.

The pub had closed down and the future of the building was uncertain at that time. The cupboard stood abandoned in the darkness of the boarded-up pub until it was rescued by current members of the Tufton family. Lord Robert Sackville and the Hon Jennifer Raikes contacted the brewers and were offered the chance to buy back their family heirloom, and to pay for its relocation.

The cupboard was a very tight fit inside the pub and was tricky to remove but I'm pleased to report that it is now in safe keeping at the National Trust's Knole House at Sevenoaks to whom it has been loaned.

Anyone wishing to see this magnificent item can pay extra to go on the 'Attic Tour' at Knole House and the cupboard is on show there. Pre-booking is essential. The Attic Tours are only run on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 11am. You can find out more about the tours, and book your place, on the National Trust website. Various photos of the cupboard can be seen on our website along with a link to Knole House.

The names 'John Tufton Earl and Margaret Countess of Thanet 1632' are carved across the front and the names John Tufton and Margaret Sackville (spelled with one 'l') are shown again on each side. As John and Margaret were married in 1629 perhaps this piece was created to commemorate their marriage?

The hefty cupboard is well over six feet tall (almost 2m) and just as wide. Across the top is carved 'A Ryghte Joyouse and welcome greetynge too ye all' which is apt for a public house but seems less appropriate for a grand mansion.

There are two Latin inscriptions: one is '*Aut nunquam tentes aut perfice*' which means '*Either do it perfectly or do not attempt it at all*' or in layman's terms '*All or nothing*'. This Latin also forms part of the Sackville coat of arms. The other Latin inscription is '*Ales Volat Propriis*' which means '*A bird flies to its own*' or we would say '*Birds of a feather flock together*'.

There are also several carved figures: one shows two people in a cart being pulled by two peacocks, with others showing nautical or mythological scenes thought to be from Greek mythology possibly with Neptune with a Queen being pulled by

ANCIENT EGYPT AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM presented by **Vicky Bailey**, London Blue Badge Guide who has studied hieroglyphs and carries out volunteer work in the Egyptian department at the British Museum

**WEDNESDAY 11th February at 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 or 01233 756377.

See also our website

Uniform



Educational Grants

Dance



Travel



Scouts Subs



Sporting Activities



University



School trips



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

8 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 Feb
Sunday 1st 11.00am The Eucharist

For services in our other churches, see www.calehill-westwell.uk

GARDENING IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH!

JOIN THE GARDENING GROUP AT CHARING SURGERY TO GET FRESH AIR, EXERCISE, MEET OTHER PEOPLE, HAVE FUN & ENJOY BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

OPEN TO ALL PATIENTS AGE 16+ GREEN FINGERS NOT ESSENTIAL!

COME AND JOIN US! TUESDAYS 9AM-12PM POP ALONG & SAY HELLO!

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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 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. Editor reserves the right to adjust all articles for space as required.