

Christmas Best Dressed House Competition

Winner!

No.1 The Street



Dates for your Diary

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

JANUARY ON HOTHFIELD HEATHLANDS

Natasha Aidinyantz on behalf of Kent Wildlife Trust, explains why there is some dramatic work currently being undertaken on the reserve. Conservationists have a difficult job sometimes in deciding what habitat would be most advantageous in an area. After looking at signs from the past you also must weigh up how much work the restoration will be and can we actually achieve this within our budgets?

With peatland covering just 3% of the Earth's surface and being the greatest terrestrial carbon sink there is, restoring Hothfield Heathlands was an easy decision. There's just 80 hectares of heathland left in Kent, with peatland taking up a small proportion of these heathland systems. The moisture retention in the soil and bogs makes the perfect habitat for carnivorous sundews, cotton grass, heath spotted orchids and bog asphodel. The exposed ground makes the perfect habitat for insects such as digger wasps and mining bees. And the large expanse of open ground makes the perfect habitat for reptiles who spend their summers basking in the sun. The site is also a haven for birds. White throats, willow warblers and yellowhammers sing from the thickets of coconut-scented gorse, little egrets feed from the ground and snipes feed in the soft boggy ground. The bog is also home to the locally rare keeled skimmer dragonfly - the males vibrant blue abdomens darting past in the summer as they search for prey.

How do you keep a peatland, peatland?

Peatland only functions if it is allowed to stay wet. And this quality can be tricky to maintain when trees begin to grow nearby. Naturally, scrub will move in and then trees will take over from scrub, turning the land into secondary woodland and removing the moisture from the soil.

The trees act as water pumps, drawing in water through their roots and transpiring it through their leaves, expelling it from the ground and into the air. Even a small birch tree will pump out over 10,000 litres a year, drying out the peatland and destroying the habitat. Though trees are considered an excellent carbon sink themselves, peatland is even better, so in this environment, we ideally want them out!



Most of the hard work removing trees and scrub is done by our grazing livestock who chomp young saplings before they have a chance to grow but one species that isn't very tasty to livestock is birch. Birch is also extremely fast growing and excellent at colonising open habitats so has become somewhat of an enemy at Hothfield Heathlands.

Thankfully, an army of Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers work tirelessly to keep birch from taking over by 'birch popping' – literally pulling out young saplings before they're too large to handle. Naturally, even our dedicated volunteers can't remove every single sapling and over the years, some birch trees have slipped past the guillotine and begun to take hold. After several years we have seen that our bogs are not able to retain as much moisture in the summer and this is putting several species at risk, including the keeled skimmer dragonfly. Thanks to funding from The Wildlife Trusts (dubbed the Precious Peatlands project) and Natural England funding from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, we have been able to tackle the tree takeover. Working on two hectares of Hothfield over four distinct areas around the wetland, we've hired contractors with specialist equipment to pull trees from their roots. The roots get separated from their trunks and piled up together to make hibernacula (habitats for reptiles), and the limbs are processed for firewood or wood chip.

Ruthless as it may seem, and despite making wellington boots a necessity for walkers in places, this work will help wildlife at Hothfield Heathlands thrive. The open ground created by the diggers will create opportunities where invertebrates can burrow, and new young shoots can grow. They can also fill with rainwater and create shallow pools which are another great wetland habitat. After similar work carried out in January last year, the exposed mud was quickly colonised by tormentil, heath bed straw and rushes. We are hoping to achieve the same results again; within just a few years, we will see a lush heathland full of life. Heather provides the main structure of the landscape and more low-lying areas are filled with species such as rushes, tormentil and orchids. It can be difficult to watch a landscape you frequently visit go through dramatic changes but I hope this explains how, for Hothfield Heathlands, the work is vital for restoring and maintaining one of the rarest habitats we have. The work done this winter will keep this all-important carbon sink alive and provide more space for peatland species to thrive. Muddy areas have been created but alternative routes are available for walkers and as always, we ask our visitors to keep their dogs under control at all times. If you'd like to join us as we continue to maintain these peatlands for years to come, you can apply to be a Hothfield Heathlands volunteer on our website. www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/support/volunteering

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

Christmas Best Dressed House Competition

There was stiff competition for the converted prize and the top three were very close.

Ultimately No.1 The Street just pipped the others to 1st prize and received a fantastic Reindeer Cake baked by Flossy Fussy Bakes.

Our annual Carol's around the Christmas Tree at Bluebells was a great success with double the people this year. The singing was wonderful with lovely refreshments and prizes for all the children.

The Parish Council would like to thank all the wonderful distributors of this Newsletter, we can't do this without you! We appreciate all your efforts.

We hope everyone has enjoyed a relaxing Christmas surrounded by loved ones and we look forward to an amazing and successful New Year 2024.

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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.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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Hothfield History on the market



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In October last year a parcel of farmland was for sale near Church Lane. The plot includes a balustrade that stood in front of the last manor house, called Hothfield Place, and is the last remaining visible remnant of that once great house. The grand Grade 2 Listed house itself was demolished in 1954 but this part of the frontage has been left intact. The house stood in what is now nearby private woodland, which wasn't part of the land for sale, but the balustrade and the land in front of it is now believed to be in new ownership. The balustrade lies just inside the Hothfield Conservation Area and hopefully will remain visible to those using the nearby public footpaths. The occupants and those visitors arriving at the front door of the manor, would have had a great view over the open parkland across to the waterfall and lake beyond.

Nearby, in the same plot of land that was for sale, is a magnificent oak tree planted in 1902 to commemorate the safe return of Captain The Honourable Johnnie Sackville Richard Tufton after serving in the Boer War. At that time the entry to Church Lane was decorated with banners and flags to welcome home the soldier. The original bronze plaque that stood at the base of the (now 122 year old) tree is currently in safe keeping as the post that it was fixed to has long since rotted away. We hope to create a replica to be installed back on site next to the veteran oak tree with the permission of the new land-owner. Johnnie Tufton became the 2nd Baron Hothfield following the death of his father Henry in 1926.



Hothfield Oct 30th 1902 Johnnie

The manor house, and the land around, were commandeered by the army during World War II as a training ground. If you know where to look in the nearby woods there are faint traces of trenches used by the soldiers to practice in, although trench warfare was pretty much outdated by WWII. After the war these trenches were refilled by the farmer, but the stinging nettles reveal their presence at the right time of year.

Johnnie Tufton was also a renowned cricketer in his day and it's perhaps no coincidence that Hothfield Place had its own cricket pitch and pavilion that was still in use up to the 1950s.

Ashford Air Raid talk

Thank you to everyone who came to the interesting talk by

Ed Adams at the end of November where he described in great detail the worst bombing raid to hit Ashford. His talk was illustrated with numerous photographs including two taken by the German bombers as the group flew over the town. The bombing raid of 15 planes was led by one of Germany's best and most prolific bomber pilots but the gunners stationed near Godinton Road succeeded in ending his career that day. The raid sadly killed many employees at the railway works (Newtown) and residents in their homes in the town. For more information on the worst ever air raid then you'll need to read Ed's latest book "Ashford at War".

Thank you to Ed for giving the talk for free, and to the Village Hall committee for hosting it. Copies of Ed's various books on local history topics are available for purchase, along with other fascinating publications by local authors including Melody Foreman and Kaye Sowden.



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THE GRANARY SPA

Holistic & Beauty

The week before Christmas can be a stressful one for many of us! Last-minute shopping, putting up decorations, writing Christmas cards and still doing the day job is certainly a recipe for feeling stressed.

Christmas is meant to be a happy, wonderful time, but it's easy to feel overwhelmed instead.

It's important to remember no one is perfect and we shouldn't even try.

Plan ahead, make lists and get organised, even delegate jobs to share the load. Remember, friends and family generally are only too happy to help, so take advantage of this. Every year I paint my closest family and friends a homemade Christmas card, it's my way of relaxing and making it extra special.

So don't put too much pressure on yourself, don't feel guilty if you forget something, it's ok to say 'no' and take some time out just for yourself, a de-stressing massage may just be the perfect gift after all!

Love, Georgia x

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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
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Christmas Best Dressed House Competition

Runner Up: 21 Sackville Close



3rd Place: 7 Plantation Close



Saint Margaret's Church

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

Services in January

Sunday 7th 11.00am The Eucharist

Sunday 21st 11.00am BCP Matins

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

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



New year is the perfect time to try The Arts Society Egerton as we offer DISCOUNTED MEMBERSHIP!

Membership for the remaining 5 months of our 2023-24 season costs just £22.40 (£40 for joint membership). Visitors are always welcome to attend for £6 per meeting.

Our lectures for 2024 begin in February and end in June. They are presented by renowned experts in their fields. You may know some of them through their publications or appearances on TV or radio. They share their knowledge and expertise in ways that are stimulating, educational and entertaining. Lectures take place in the Millennium Hall in Elm Close TN27 9DS on the second Wednesday of the month at 2.30 pm. Forthcoming lectures:

February 14th: the History of the Royal School of Needlework with Susan Kay-Williams

March 13th: the Men who made Menswear with Russell Nash

April 10th: The Dancing Faun: a personal Story of a Masterpiece with Bertie Pearce

May 8th: Uncompromising Genius: the Life and Work of Frank Lloyd Wright with Fiona Rose

June 12th: West End Winners – the rise of the British Musical from Noel Coward to Lionel Bart with Dr John Snelson

From 2024 we will launch a new programme of visits to places of cultural interest in Kent and London. Members also receive discounts at the West House Gallery in Smarden.

At an additional cost we will offer a Study Day in May with BBC Antique's Roadshow's Mark Hill entitled Un-dressing Antiques which will include valuations of 20th century ceramics and glass.

Our 2024-25 season starts in September

For further details about this and other lectures visit our website at <https://theartsocietyegerton.org.uk>

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

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