



THE WESTWELL EYE

192

February

2019

The Wheel

Local Menu will change and will continue to be available through out February at the same price!

8th February we will be hosting a Gringos, Tequila and Fajitas Night!

14th Valentine's special dinner

15th Steak Night, followed by Karoke

22nd Quiz night followed by music by Clive Bainbridge's band Group Therapy

Contact: 01233 712223
info@thewheelinnwestwell.uk



1st February
4th + 18th February
12th February
12th + 26th, February
22nd February

10.30am Coffee in The Wheel
1.30pm Art Group - all welcome
11am Book Club - The Wheel - p13
7.30pm Player's play reading - p10
7pm Quiz - The Wheel



February 2019

SUNDAY	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
3 Advent Sunday 8am Holy Communion Players Tech rehearsal a.m 3-5pm Messy Church	4 1.30pm Art Group 7pm Fitness	5 7.30pm Players	6 11am Fistssteps - Dance as U Go	7 Re.F.T. 9.15am Pilates 7.30pm Hall management	8	9
10 2nd Sunday of Advent 11am Iona Eucharist	11 7pm Fitness	12 Book Club - p13 7.30pm Players play reading	13 11am Fistssteps - Dance as U Go	14 R.F.W 9.15am Pilates 7.15pm WI Meeting	15	16
17 3rd Sunday of Advent 4pm Carol Service	18 1.30pm Art Group 7pm Fitness	19	20	21 Re.F.T. 9.15am Pilates	22	23
24 4th Sunday of Advent 3pm Christingle	25 7pm Fitness	26 7.30pm Players play reading	27 11am Fistssteps - Dance as U Go	28 R.F.W 9.15am Pilates	Mar 1 10am Iona Eucharist 10.30 Coffee Wheel	2
3	4	5	6	7	1	2

From the Editor's desk...

Nothing to report, so here's a Valentine's Day recipe.

Squidgy chocolate pear pudding

Prep: 20 mins

Cook: 35mins

Easy

Serves 8

200g butter plus extra for greasing

4 large eggs

50g cocoa powder

100g plain dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids)

cream or ice cream, to serve

300g golden caster sugar

75g plain flour

410g can pear halves in juice, drained

25g flaked almonds (optional)

Heat oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Lightly grease a roughly 20 x 30cm shallow ovenproof dish. Put the butter in a large saucepan and place over a low heat until just melted. Remove the butter from the heat and stir in the sugar until well combined.

Whisk the eggs together in a large bowl. Gradually add the eggs to the butter and sugar, beating well with a wooden spoon in between each addition. Sift the flour and cocoa powder on top of the egg mixture, then beat hard with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined.

Pour into the prepared tin or dish and nestle the pears into the chocolate batter. Put the chocolate on a board and cut into chunky pieces roughly 1.5cm with a large knife. Scatter the chocolate pieces over the batter and sprinkle with almonds, if you like. Can be frozen at this stage.

Bake in the centre of the oven for 30 mins or until the mixture is crusty on the surface and lightly cooked inside. Do not allow to overcook, as the cake will become spongy rather than gooey in the centre. Serve warm with cream or ice cream

Photos: Sheep enjoying beet roots in the mist - taken by Nada

Ivy with her trade mark jam. She was 87 in January

Ode to the Haggis - taken by Nada

Carolyn Thorneloe 

The views of any contributor to this publication may not necessarily be those of the editor and team, nor can the Westwell Eye accept any responsibility in connection with any companies or organisations mentioned or any advertiser.

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Useful Contacts

Telephone Numbers

Age UK	642094
Ashford Volunteer Bureau	633219
Bees (swarming)	
Andy Bithell	740650 / 07933892413
Borough Councillor:	
Larry Krause	01233 643497
CAB	626185
Carers Support Group	664393
Childline Freephone	0800 1111
Cinema	0871 2208000
Citizens' Advice Bureau	626185
Cruse Bereavement Counselling	878225
Doctors (Charing)	01233 714490
(Hayesbank)	624642
Dog Warden	01233 330340
Hospital (William Harvey)	633331
KCC Community Warden for Hothfield, Charing and Challock, Dave Beckley	0797798199
CROP	01622 851200
Library (Ashford)	03000413131
(Charing)	713177
MS Therapy Centre	01227 470876
NHS Direct	0845 4647
NSPCC	0800 800500
Parish Hall Booking	01233 712016
doriscackett@btinternet.com	
Parish Council (clerk, Sue Wood)	623902
Pilgrims' Hospice (Admin)	504100
(Patient enquiries)	504112
PCC Secretary (Heather Lister)	712981
Police (rural matters only – crime should be reported on 101 or 999)	07980978202
Samaritans	610000
Shopmobility	621196
Solicitor (Thorneloe & Co.)	01622 859416
Victim Support	0845 30 30 900
Water Supplies Queries	0333 000 0002
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Wealden Wheels	01233 840000
Westwell Community Website:	
http://www.westwellpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/	

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Sam Stacy Waddy

Some of you will remember the Stacy Waddys who lived at White House Court in Westwell village. Sam and Christopher and their three children Drusilla, Daniel and Jocelyn. They moved back to Bungay in Suffolk some years ago, but friendships made in Westwell remained strong.

Sadly on January 24th Sam's funeral took place in a beautiful country church at Barsham. Sam died on 8th January after a short battle with lung cancer, aged 73. Sam was a no fuss enthusiastic organiser; she was of course on the Barsham church PCC. Sam was at the heart of the swinging sixties as a bright eyed brunette in a Minicooper. Sam and Christopher were equally charismatic; making homes in several countries. Westwell was where Drusilla, Daniel and Jocelyn grew up; now all have their own young families so saying goodbye to Granny Sam was tough. But there were many happy memories to share over champagne in the church surrounded by friends after a lovely service that Sam had arranged. Drusilla's husband Robert gave the Eulogy which included the music making in Westwell with the Thorneloes, round the corner at Swinford Cottage.

Sam will be missed but certainly not forgotten.

Christine Drury

I have so many happy and fond memories of time spent with the Stacy Waddy family, but one is particularly relevant to those of my readers who knew them.

Tony Boardman, who some of you will remember, organised Christmas Carol singing round a brazier in the Wheel car park, for several years. Then Tony and Rosemary moved. Carol singing would stop.

One day Sam and I looked at each other and said "just because Tony has moved doesn't mean the end of carol singing". We put our heads together and with a committee of two, aided by our husbands, Christopher and Michael, carols in the hall was born – under no circumstances were we going to get cold or run the risk of getting wet! There was always a Christmas tree for the children and OAP party – another annual event which does not happen now – and so the hall looked very festive.

Sam and Christopher supplied the mulled wine, at no cost; Sam organised the various readings and roped in the readers, mainly children, and I roped in the musicians and a few solo singers, there again mostly children. The 'orchestration' was unusual to say the least so I had to do a certain amount part writing! We did this for several years, I think until our own children would do it no more and we were finding it impossible to get co-erced volunteers!

I kept in touch with Sam after they moved back to Suffolk and indeed she rang me several times when Michael was ill and was going to come to his memorial concert, but had a 'bad back' which I think led to her diagnosis. I am sure those who knew them would like to join me in sending deepest sympathy to Drusilla, Daniel and Jocelyn, I will miss her.

Carolyn Thorneloe

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Parish Council

The Parish Council met in St Mary's Church on Monday 7th January. The meeting began with the Open Session. Complaints were received about littering throughout the parish - in light of this the Parish Council will organise a litter-pick in the parish during February. It is hoped to borrow the equipment needed from the borough council. There were concerns that the proposed resurfacing of Pilgrims Way by KCC would be with unsuitable material and the landowner had not been notified in advance – this will be taken up with the relevant department in KCC.

Larry Krause, borough councillor, was present and reported that the Inspectors' report on the Local Plan had been published: the 'A20 corridor sites' had been deleted as being unsuitable; the traveller site in Watery Lane would be restricted to 1 pitch.

The Staffing Committee reported its recommendations for the Clerk's salary award from April 2019, which were in line with the recommendations from the National Association of Local Councils. These were agreed by the Parish Council.

The minutes of the November meeting were approved and matters arising discussed, these included a survey of traffic speeds in Westwell Lane from the waterworks towards the village centre – costs will be met by Charlie Simkins (county councillor). Planning matters followed, including discussion of 2 planning applications. Village confines: the draft map issued by the borough council for the village will be revised by the Parish Council after the public consultation at the end of January and anomalies highlighted by councillors will be corrected. The updated map will be submitted to the borough council in mid February.

The Financial report was approved and the budget agreed for 2019-2020. The precept was increased to £24367 but would be levied over a greater number of properties because of the parish boundary change in May 2019. Properties which have already been paying into the precept should not see a significant increase in this part of their council tax bill, the 'new' properties will pay the charge for the first time and therefore their bills will rise (the size of the increase being dependent on their council tax banding). The additional income raised will be used for future parish projects, and an increase in costs of printing the Eye.

Reports were received from councillors and included: acoustic panels are being installed in the hall; a new litter bin will be ordered for the playing field; an AED will be installed at the Hare and Hounds; as last year there will not be a speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting. this will allow more time for reports and discussion.

The next meeting is on Monday 4th March at 7pm in St Mary's Church, all meetings are open to the public and all are welcome.



WESTWELL WI

This month's meeting started with the singing of Jerusalem and then happy birthday to members whose birthdays were in January. The normal business was swiftly dealt with and events suggested for the year were announced to members.

Events already arranged were a Coffee Evening on Thursday 7th March, a Ladies Lunch at The George, Molash on Friday 22nd March 2019, a Race Night on Friday 10th May 2019 to include a ploughman's supper, a croquet evening on 7th June and a Quiz Night on Friday 18th October 2019, also to include a ploughman's supper.

Future events would be Bat 'n Trap, a Pudding Night; Craft Sessions; Crib Evenings; an Outing; London Beech; 10 Pin Bowling and a BBQ.

There was one report from Mary Anne Pitt who had won the 2016 bursary. Mary Anne reported that she had used her bursary to learn the new skill of needle felting at Denman House and thoroughly recommended the Denman experience to all members. She then showed members the Heirloom Christmas Fairy she had made during her visit.

Last year's competition results were announced with Mary Anne Pitt coming first, closely followed by Doris Cackett. Joint third place went to Joan Richards and Marilyn Warner.

The Speakers for the night were Andrew Saunders and Clive Bainbridge who talked us through the serious matter of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), the use of the Westwell defibrillator and how to deal with a person who was choking. The delivery was both sensitive and humorous although I'm not quite sure how we will ever recover from seeing our newly elected President, Gail suddenly vomiting out green pellets during the choking demonstration. Many thanks to Andrew and Clive as I'm sure there are now more people who have had their minds put at rest and would be prepared to "give it a go" should the need arise.

The evening ended with the competition and a raffle.

Anyone wishing to know more about the Westwell WI and what it means to be a WI member should email Catherine at westwellwi2015@gmail.com

Catherine Hazelden

Next Meeting:- Thursday 14th February

Speaker:- Path to Vicarage, Sue Starkings.

Vote of thanks:- Pat Warren

Hostesses:- Liz Jamieson; Celeste Muir and Valerie Hooper.

Competition:- Snowdrop (one or more).



Ashford and District Road Running Club

www.ashforddistrictrrc.co.uk/
Affiliated to AAA of E, SEAA, KCAA and LDWA
CASC registered No 02729

Ashford & District 10k – Sunday 10th February – 10.30am Start

Dear Resident,

I am writing to inform you that, on Sunday 10th February 2019, we will be running our annual 10k race from the start in Sandyhurst Lane into Lenacre Street and down to Westwell Road onto Westwell Lane. The runners will then turn right at the water mill and turn left around the Gold Hill loop and past The Wheel pub onto Westwell Lane. They will then head back up Kingsland Lane, turning right at the top, back to where it finishes on Lenacre street where it meets Sandyhurst Lane.

This year the club are celebrating their 30th running of the event, and as in previous years, we are expecting a large number of runners. Participants will be parking at our new HQ at the Towers School.

There will be road closures in place from 10:15am to keep everyone safe. The race starts at 10:30am this year. The remaining road closures will be lifted once the last runners have safely returned. There will be clear signage placed in accordance with highways regulations.

This is a great event, which many of you have supported over the years. If you are not running, but would like to support the runners it would be great if you cheer them along their way – it makes such a difference to the runners and they are always grateful for any cheers. We know that a number of you have done this in the past and hope to see you this year as well. The race raises money to help fund the club's activities for the year and has become an important part of the local running calendar.

Once again we appreciate your patience and support for this community event, and we sincerely hope that you will enjoy the event with us and cheer the runners round the beautiful course.

Yours faithfully Paul Moses, Chairman

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Elections in May this year !

With the news so dominated by Brexit political chaos and threats of impending traffic gridlock in Kent, it is easy to miss other more local government things that will happen this year:

Parish Council elections will take place in May.

The last election was in 2015. Councils are in office for four years.

The way it works is that all current parish councillors cease to be parish councillors when the election is called – that date will be sometime in late March or early April. Councillors who want to stand for election again need to submit a new nomination form,

as do other new people who wish to stand for election.

All candidates are equal. Like most parish councils Westwell is not party political so everyone stands independently and last time all candidates agreed to participate in a single sheet A4 page double sided leaflet providing everyone's picture and a short personal statement. This was delivered to every address in Westwell parish. Assuming we do the same this time round the addresses will include the new properties that have come into Westwell parish on the east side of Sandyhurst Lane.

So what does all this mean?

First DO make sure you are on the electoral role so you can vote for the parish councillors you want in May.

The date of the election is Thursday May 2nd 2019.

Second, if you would like to consider being a parish councillor. DO find out more about what is involved: it is good fun as well as being serious - the parish council is a formal part of local government - and satisfying being able to achieve things for our community.

Contact the Parish Clerk Sue Wood on 01233 623902 or any of the present parish councillors directly: Tessa Wyatt, Tom Lawrence, Lucy Farrington, Nick Faulkner, Ron Butcher, Tony Bartlett, Clive Bainbridge, Tim Lister or Christine Drury.

It is always good to have more candidates than the 9 seats on the council: that makes for a proper election in which we all have to choose between candidates, and an elected parish council has more authority to do things for our Westwell parish community. And to everyone:

DO make sure you are on the electoral register in order to have a vote.

Godinton House and Gardens Spring Garden Workshops



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Letter to the Parishes

The New Year is here. The Partying is over and it is back to normality. The Christmas decorations are down and stored away for later this year (Yes only 11 months until we get them out again – or 7 months probably in the shops!)

How much of Christmas is still with us?

The Rev Sheila wrote last month about; “The Epiphany and the Wise Men and their searching for the baby Jesus. Do remember the saying, “The wise men searched for Jesus and wise men (people) still do”.

What was your lasting memory of the Celebrations of such a world shattering event - the Birth of God’s Son? Was it one of the services you went to, something that was said, one of the readings or something in one of the carols?

How about the sermon in Charing Heath’s carol service? Just three words acted out by some young people. “Follow the Star” (Furthering our reflections in the little Booklet issued by the Church of England and read by many of us).

Is that a catch phrase we could keep as our motto for this year? The world spends a lot of time, energy and money following the stars of screen, stage and sports field. Do you spend a lot of time following the “STAR” of the Christmas story?

What were those well-loved carols? “O come all ye faithful” to what? Or “While shepherds watched” ... and then did what? or “Once in Royal David’s city” and Mary did what? Or “Hark the herald angels sing” what did they sing?

Those oh so well known words sung so enthusiastically every year. but what did they say to you this year? Yes we know them off by heart and know the tune but do we ever stop and pause and reflect on what we are singing?

Perhaps one of the most prominent phrases is in the first line of the first carol I quoted above: “O come”. Come to what in this the 21st century? No, not actually to Bethlehem, but to be closer to God in Jesus. How, you may ask? What do I need to do or join or read or ? I think the answer is to Pray (ie spending time with God) and as we pray so God draws us into His Kingdom. No not a Kingdom as we see it on earth but a spiritual place of knowing God more intimately. This we surely do by our Bible reading, attending worship with other like-minded Christians, join a Prayer Meeting, join a Home Group, just being with other Christians and talking about Jesus.

SO in this new year beside all those new year resolutions you have made (and probably broken by now) **let’s all “follow the star” Jesus.** and may you always know His presence.

Richard Webb

Etc

Coffee at The Wheel Inn

Coffee at The Wheel, **Friday 1st February**
from 10.30 - 11.45am. All welcome.



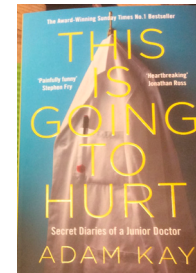
WAGS – Westwell Art Group
4th, 18th February.



Book Club January 2019

Happy New Year! And to celebrate we met at the Wheel Pub for lunch.

There were nine of us. We discussed Christmas and had a lovely lunch. Our next meeting is on 12th February and we discuss “This is Going to Hurt”, by Adam Kay. This is the memoir of a junior doctor, a very true rendition of life at the hospital filled with humour and anatomical and medical detail.



In March we discuss any work by Maya Angelou. A very short entry this time. Happy reading

Charing History Society

14th February

William The Conqueror, Justified Invader?

Speaker:- James Dickinson

We all know that William invaded England in 1066. What is less well known is that William may have a justified claim to the English throne.

This talk outlines the basis of this interesting claim. It will also cover the invasion, the battle of Hastings and the advance on London and deal briefly with William’s rule and the circumstances of his death.

Litter Pick

Lucy Farrington is planning to do some weekday litter picking along Watery Lane during **February**. If you’d like to join in, please call 712628 to liaise regarding a suitable date: the more the merrier!

Charing Gardeners’ Society

We have another afternoon talk this month, on Saturday 16th February at 2pm in the Church Barn. Ian Currie will talk about Weather Lore - Fact or Fiction?

All welcome, £3 for non-members includes a cuppa and a chance to chat after the talk. Raffle, seed-swap and plant stall, contributions always welcome. Annual membership is a bargain at £3 and includes our 2019 Annual hot off the press, packed with articles, show schedules and details of members’ events. Check out our Facebook page for news and photos of recent events and for further information about the society see: <http://charinggardeners.org.uk>

Parish News

Westwell Church Services for February
www.g7benefice.org

Friday 1st

10am Iona Eucharist

Sunday 3rd: 4th Sunday of Epiphany

8am Holy Communion

Sunday 10th: 5th Sunday of Epiphany

11am Iona Eucharist

6pm Ecumenical Service -

Charing Methodist Church

Sunday 17th: 3rd Sunday before Lent

11am Family Service

Sunday 24th: 2nd Sunday before Lent

11am Eucharist

Monday 24th; Christmas Eve

Every Tuesday

9am Charing – The Eucharist

7pm Charing Heath – Prayer and Bible Study

Family Church in February

Messy celebrates the mid point of winter and spring at Candlemas with lights and bird feeders. Prepare to get very messy!

Sunday **3rd February** at 3.30pm in the Westwell Parish Hall.



All age service in February on **17th February** at 11am in St Mary's invites everyone to join together in an informal service with a range of activities, this month there's a lot of trees.

Coffee collection is for the Archbishop's charity, A Place to call Home.



March Events

Messy is on **3rd March** and will celebrate Spring and Pancakes.

Family service is on **March 17th**

Mothering Sunday will be at the end of the month, **31st March**, details will be announced in the March issue.

William Shakespeare's Words on Love

So long as I can breathe or I can see so long lives your love which gives life to me.

When you depart from me sorrow abides, and happiness takes his leave.

Love looks not with eyes, but with the mind.

Love is the most beautiful of dreams and the worst of nightmares.

Love is a spirit of all compact of fire.

My heart is ever at your service.

Love looks not with the eyes,
but with the mind;

And therefore is winged

Cupid painted blind.

Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move.
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.

My bounty is as deep as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.

From Inspirational Words of Wisdom

Church Cleaning Rota.

Cleaning. Sarah Stevenson

Flowers. Heather Lister

Brass. Sheila Filmer



Let 'Wheels 2 Work Kent' kick start 2019!

We all appreciate the difficulties faced by those living in our rural communities; many of us are already working with community groups in the area to help parishioners make the most of what's available to them.

We all know that as the Local Authorities face tighter budgets it's the rural villages that seem to suffer the most; uneconomic bus routes, even though they are a lifeline to some, are always one of the first services to be hit; train travel, where you're lucky enough to have it, can be expensive and not always reliable!

Take transport away from a village and you take the lifeblood out of its community which can result in social isolation and in many cases losing the ability to earn a living or pursue further education or vocational training.

This is where **'Wheels to Work Kent'** would love to help. We are a charitable project providing two wheel transport at affordable rates, to anyone who is eligible with a driving licence (provisional or full).

Riders who join our scheme benefit from the use of a **fully taxed and insured** 50cc or 110cc machine, all the necessary **protective clothing** - Helmet, Jacket, Gloves and Hi-Vis Vest and we take care of the **servicing, maintenance** and any **breakdown cover**.

Working out at around **£5.00 per day** (plus fuel), our scheme compares very favourably with other forms of public transport with the added bonus of the **flexibility** that **'having your own wheels'** affords.

Please take a few moments to look at our **Facebook page (W2W Kent)** and our website **www.w2wkent.co.uk** which provides full details about the scheme and how it could help those living in the parish.

We might just make that difference between your parishioners being able to take up a job offer or college place rather than having to turn it down because they can't rely on being able to get there.

We would be very happy to discuss how we can work with you in your community to provide that final piece in the jigsaw; between us we can open doors and facilitate opportunities for all, to ensure our rural communities stay connected.

1st Charing Scout Group



With the new year we are thinking about our programmes for the year. We want to ensure that our young people are exposed to an interesting and challenging range of activities that are also fun. Cubs are exploring world religions and festivals. Chinese New Year should be fun. Scouts are working on their DIY badge and are making a few useful extras for our new headquarters.

Terry Lister



Westwell Players

How far did the sound of laughter reach on Tuesday evening? It was the Players first meeting for the new year and we read a very funny script about a very unfunny subject! There was a rather dysfunctional family who slowly gathered together on a hillside in Yorkshire to do a little 'bonding' before scattering their Father's ashes in the spot he had asked for!! It doesn't sound funny but it was. We had some very unusual Yorkshire accents and although our numbers were few, the spirit was fantastic and a good evening was had by all and we journeyed home with smiles on our faces. We are all disappointed that there will be no Spring Show this year but we are equally buoyed up by the fact that we are going to meet every other Tuesday evening to read scripts or to go on outings to see shows together. Our November dates are fixed and the Hall is booked for NOVEMBER, 21, 22 AND 23RD, times to be arranged later! We are probably producing a Pantomime and look forward to that with great pleasure, as I hope all our audiences will as well! Meanwhile, please let me know if anyone would like to volunteer to make tea – play the piano – or help either on or off the stage, we are always so pleased to see new faces. May I close by wishing all our 'injured' members a very speedy recovery. Margaret Moore is still in Brabourne Nursing Home with a very poorly arm and back and is facing yet another operation to sort out one or other of her vertebrae, poor soul, I visited yesterday and she was being very brave but she has not been home since the end of our last Show at the beginning of December. We all wish her a speedy return to full health.

Mary Anne Pitt 714241

Planning applications

18/01741/AS Dunn Street Cottage, Pilgrims Way: Supported by the Parish Council and a decision is awaited from Ashford Borough Council

18/01729/AS Bears Corner, Westwell Lane, Ashford: The Parish Council had no comments to make and the application was approved by ABC

18/01003/AS Fallowfield, The Street, Westwell: Approved by ABC



February on Hothfield Heathlands

Why is there heathland at Hothfield? Because of the sandy soil (Folkestone Beds) and underlying clay (Sandgate Beds). Sand is inert, free draining so can't hold on to nutrients, dries out in summer, is easily eroded. In places the clay creates an impervious pan preventing water from draining away and bog or fen results from the partial decay of plant and animal material. As living things create order out of disorder in even the most inhospitable environment, each soil type becomes colonised by the plants that are adapted to the available level of anchorage and sunlight, of water, air and accessible nutrients in the soil and conditions for root growth. The mutually dependent micro-organisms, insects, birds and animals adapted to these specialist conditions follow.

Encroaching trees and scrub, animal and human activity including air pollution, all gradually alter soil composition, usually enriching it. Warden Ian Rickards explains: "Low nutrient in the soil are incredibly important for a heathland, as nutrients increase it becomes more attractive for more vigorous plants and grasses which then out-compete the rare fragile plants like heath spotted orchid, hare bell, sundew and lousewort. When we have machines available we carry out scrapes, taking off the top layer of nutrient enriched soil, often dominated by stinging nettles and willow herbs, to reveal the poor sandy soil beneath. This will then get re-colonised by the heathland plants."

One sunny sandy scrape near the old football field is now early-stage heathland, with just ground-hugging plants but much insect and micro-organism activity. Scrapes made in the more nutrient-rich fen in autumn 2018 will colonise more quickly. Bare soil is also space for reptiles to bask on, beetles to hunt across, and bees and wasps to dig into for nests. Plus the myriad invisible burrowers aerating, breaking down and transferring dead plant and animal material or just hibernating, a niche habitat just below your feet.

Ian continues: "We often use the scraped material to improve the paths and trails around the reserve. It is understandable that visitors will want to avoid wet and muddy paths, and will often walk on the edges or create new routes. It is easy to see how this damages the heathland vegetation, with heather being particularly sensitive to trampling." (Heather can grow for up to 40 years and all stages of growth are essential to different insects. MT) "Very quickly paths get wider and wider, or new paths become established with the solid blocks of heather becoming divided up into smaller and smaller areas. Improving the paths is hard work and done with spades, wheel barrows and our wonderful team of volunteers. When visiting you can make a big difference, please stay on the main established paths and wear footwear suitable for putting up with the muddy sections we haven't been able to improve."

Hothfield Heathland is open to everyone. Please keep dogs in check especially around children and animals, and clean up including in the Triangle compartment. Trails are signposted and marked on entrance maps, along with the location of livestock. The noticeboard down the main slope from the Cade Road car park gives recent wildlife sightings. For email alerts on the location of the livestock on Hothfield contact Ian Rickards on 01622 662012 / ian.rickards@kentwildlife.org.uk. If you would like to come and join us on one of our volunteer task days, we will be out on Sunday 10th February, starting at 10am, baked potatoes provided!

Margery Thomas