

Houghton Hall Park

May 2018 Newsletter

The Houghton Hall Park Renaissance and Renewal Project is being managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council and is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.



Sunshine and shade by Sally Gray

What a busy month we have in May, we are so pleased that the days are getting warmer, the sun is setting later, the wildflowers are beginning to flower across the grasslands and the trees are filling out with luscious green leaves around the park once again, what a beautiful sight.

In this latest newsletter, you will find out about:

- Our Open Day on 20th May
- May's Photography Theme
- April's photography entries
- Mark Hogan's Spring article
- Volunteering event this month
- And what happened in April

A great place to live and work.



We welcome you to join us at Houghton Hall Park's very first Open Day! This event is to celebrate the Renaissance & Renewal Project funded by the Heritage Lottery & Big Lottery Fund that has enabled Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council to restore the Formal & Kitchen Gardens, restore vitality in the park and build a new Visitor Centre and Café for the local community which opened in October 2017. There will be a programme of *FREE* activities for all the family to enjoy as part of the event, here are some activities that have been released so far:

- A live Chainsaw Carving by a local craftsmen
- A Wildlife Trail dotted around the park for families to find and learn new fun facts
- There will be a Heritage Cinema based in the Visitor Centre showing presentations produced by the Houghton Regis Heritage Society about the history of the park and local area
- Plant poppy wildflowers in the park in the fun form of a 'seed bomb' with the Greensand Trust and Houghton Hall Park volunteers for the centenary marking the First World War (2014-2018)
- Full House Arts are creating a celebratory short film to be shown on the day
- The Café will be running a BBQ between 12-3pm, based on the grass next to the Centre
- Stalls will be held in the Visitor Centre by groups using our facilities for activities such as the Houghton Regis Heritage Society, The Story Frog, Moo Music, Greensand Trust & more! Chat to them on the day if you'd like to get involved in the activities they run within the park.

For more activities please keep your eye on our Facebook page – 'Houghton Hall Park' and follow the Open Day event to find out more. We hope to see you there!



Monthly Photography Themes

We welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use imagination and enter our monthly themes, May's theme is: **Your Pets within Houghton Hall Park**. Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st and 31st May 2018 and each person can submit up to 5 entries. We will not accept any overly photoshopped images that do not represent the reality of the subject in the photo.

Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter. Please see our website for the full terms and conditions before submitting your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography. See below some entries sent in for April's theme: Spring within Houghton Hall Park, thank you all for your creative entries!



Sally Gray: April shower



Sally Gray: Cowslips



Westley Hayes



Westley Hayes



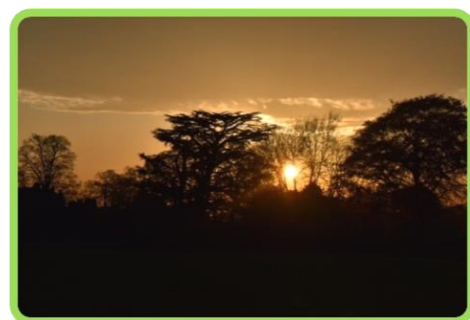
Ivor Mitchelmore:
Blackthorn



Ivor Mitchelmore:
Lesser Celandine



Michaela Gould



Michaela Gould



George Wharwood:
Family Tree



Mike Harrison



Michaela Gould

Spring is here and new life too! *Written by Mark Hogan*



Butterfly on Buddleia

When I drove along the road the other day I got a total shock - I looked up and all the dead, lifeless trees were all green and full of leaves, with lots of blossom too. It was a sign that Spring is truly here. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day, I saw a Red Kite flying overhead being chased by 2 angry crows, it made me smile.

Springtime is when the majority of British birds have chicks, so your gardens will be full of tiny little birds flapping their wings and trying to attract their parents attention for some food. I see a lot of posts where people say, "What do I do if I find a baby bird on the ground?", rule of thumb is that you should just leave them as it is highly unlikely that

their parents have left them, they are probably off collecting some food for them or hiding nearby, keeping a watchful eye on them. Removing them from the wild should be a last resort and only if they are injured or have been abandoned. Stand back and watch to see what happens or to see if anyone approaches when you do, but make sure not to touch them.

There are other ways in which we can help some birds such as the insect eaters like Blackbirds, Sparrows, Robins and Wrens by leaving a small patch of our gardens to overgrow, you could even get a packet of wild flower seeds and put them in the same patch of garden and let it just grow to attract insects and bugs later on in the year. You never know what you might find, and it is one way in which we can teach our kids about nature and learn something new ourselves as well. You could also buy yourself a bird bath as Starlings and Blackbirds always like to have a wash and it is quite entertaining watching them splash about in the water, a lot of birds also need it to drink water, especially in warmer days.



Male Blackbird



Goldfinches

I have 4 different feeders in my little garden, 2 with sunflower hearts in, one with peanuts and the other one has suet fat balls. I am quite lucky because I get all sorts of birds every day, lots of Goldfinches which love the sunflower hearts and I even occasionally get a flock of Long Tailed Tits on the suet fat balls, which they seem to really enjoy. If you want to encourage insects then buy yourself an insect house to encourage them, plant some lavender or other plants that attract bees like Buddleia (also known as a Butterfly bush) or herbs like Thyme, Fennel and Borage. I have 3 different lavender plants and get many bees on them.

Summer also brings birds such as Swallows, House Martins and Swifts too, swooping around the sky trying to catch insects on the wing. Did you know that Swifts never land on the ground to drink? They can drink water by going across a river or lake and swooping down and getting themselves a drink! When I used to live in Luton in an Old Mock Tudor house, we used to have Swifts nesting in the eaves outside our bathroom every year. You could hear them clearly and I had a few close encounters where they flew literally past my head and up to their nests.

I hope you all enjoy Spring and the days as they get warmer and I hope that you get all sorts of wildlife, bugs and insects in your gardens. If you do, send a picture in of them to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and we might include them in the next monthly newsletter!

Photography and written by Mark Hogan

Volunteer at the park this month



Take part in valuable conservation work at Houghton Hall Park with the Greensand Trust one Sunday a month! This month on **Sunday 20th May 10am-3pm**, the activity will be combined Seed & Weed activity with the local community. The first half of the day will be weeding Comfrey & Hogweed from the wildflower meadow and the second half of the day will be creating 'seed bombs' as part of the Open Day and planting these wild poppy seeds in a triangle area on the outskirts of the park near the Formal Gardens ready to flower

for the centenary marking the First World War (2014-2018). If you would like to come along, please email: hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know. The meeting spot will be the Visitor Centre car park on Park Road North. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.

What happened in April...

We'd like to thank all those little explorers out there for attending our 2 orienteering activities run in the beginning of April, we had some lovely weather and plenty of fun finding the cards hidden in the park and answering the questions, some were pretty tricky!

We ran a Beginner's bird song walk and believe it or not there were almost 40 species heard on the walk with Central Bedfordshire Council's Senior Countryside Officer, Steve Halton. The list of species found is below, see if you can hear some of these bird songs on your walks and make sure to let us know if you hear any that aren't on the list, we would be very keen to know! Please email this to hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. Bird songs heard (the 'Red' and 'Amber' listed species have been identified as being in decline by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature):

Pheasant	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Blue Tit	Nuthatch	Dunnock
Buzzard		Great Tit	Treecreeper	House Sparrow
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Kestrel	Coal Tit	Wren	Pied Wagtail
Stock Dove	Magpie	Swallow	Starling	Chaffinch
Woodpigeon	Jackdaw	Long-tailed Tit	Blackbird	Bullfinch
Collared Dove	Rook	Chiffchaff	Song Thrush	Greenfinch
Tawny Owl	Carrion Crow	Blackcap	Mistle Thrush	Linnet
Green Woodpecker	Goldcrest	Whitethroat	Robin	Goldfinch



The Friends of Houghton Hall Park's conservation task in April was to carry out a thorough litter pick with the Greensand Trust. On sunny Sunday 22nd April, they ended up with a total of 19 bags full of rubbish! They really cleared out the park going into all areas to remove anything that might cause harm to local wildlife, we can't thank you enough, and neither can the wildlife living in Houghton Hall Park for giving their home a thorough spring clean!

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Opening Times

April to October

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm

November to March

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:00pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 15:00pm



Become a friend of Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of joining the Friends of Houghton Hall Park? Then get in touch with us to see what you can do to get involved. Here are some ideas below:

- Observational Surveys
- Community engagement
- Weeding and clearing
- Cleaning
- Watering
- Growing food and encourage healthy eating
- Teach younger generations (if you have a skill or qualification, let us know!)
- Become a community leader
- Support other volunteers
- Contribute to the annual park events calendar
- Volunteering assistant at events running at the park
- Curate local history talks at visitor centre
- Habitat enhancement work in the woodland and meadow

There are many opportunities to take part. If you would like to volunteer and join the Friends of Houghton Hall Park, please email hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Central Bedfordshire Council



LOTTERY FUNDED