



Houghton Hall Park

June 2019 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.

It's June, summer is just around the corner!

What's On

Meadowlands

When: Saturday 8th & Sunday 9th June

Where: Houghton Hall Visitor Centre

If you are looking for something to do with your children, come to Houghton Hall Park this weekend!

Entry is free, but there is a small fee for some of the theatre shows and workshops.

On Saturday, TurnAround Dance Theatre will perform their spectacle of *The Thief, the Fox and the Phoenix*, a captivating show which fuses circus, dance, live-singing and story-telling. It is aimed at kids aged 4 to 8, but the whole family will enjoy this adventure to discover the true meaning of friendship.

On Sunday 9 June children aged 6 to 12 years can take part in the Circus Stars Workshop with performer Suzanne Nixon to learn traditional circus skills, such as plate-spinning, juggling and clowning.



A great place to live and work.

Across the whole weekend, families can also take part in free drop-in craft activities, story-telling sessions, face-painting, and the Meadowlands Activity Trail.

The festival finale will conclude on Sunday afternoon with a free Circus Showcase by local youngsters from Houghton Regis Art Town. For further details and booking information, go to www.fullhouse.org.uk/meadowlands or call 01525 630783.

Pop Up Crafts

Every Friday, starting 14th June, we are using the space in the Visitor's Centre foyer for local crafters to sell their wares! Every week there will be a new trader.

If you are interested in having a stall please contact us at hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.



May's Events

Heritage Open Day

The Heritage Open Day on 25th May was a huge success. The meeting room was full all afternoon with members of the public learning about the picture archive and reminiscing about the past. The glider in the park was also a hit, there was a lot of engagement from children who were allowed to sit in it and they also asked many questions. The storytelling sessions were very engaging and the children learnt about some of the history of the park as far back as two hundred years ago!



Forest School



Branch Out Forest School held two sessions in May and it was a huge success! Children took part in activities such as bug bingo, fairy house making, den building and creating nature bracelets. We are hoping to add some more sessions in the summer holidays, watch this space!



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 16th June 10am-3pm**, it will be a nice wander around the park checking the paths for trip hazards, pot holes, encroaching vegetation, overhanging branches, and other hazards to the public. If you would like to come along, please email: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there!



Dog Walking at Houghton Hall Park

Houghton Hall Park is very dog friendly, and four legged friends are very welcome guests in all areas of the park including the visitor centre and cafe.

In mid-June, we will be introducing signage informing of small areas of the park where dogs must be kept on a lead.

These areas combined make up a very minimal amount of space in the park, and the vast majority of the park is unaffected, including all the woodland areas of the park, the open meadows, and sports pitches. If you are a dog owner/walker, please familiarise yourself with the designated areas which are displayed on the new signage and indicated on the map.



Why are we doing this?

Only areas where dogs off-lead could pose a health and safety issue have been designated to dogs on lead:

- The car park and children's play areas are designated as dogs on leads due to safety considerations – with regular vehicle movements in the car park and young children on the play equipment.
- The produce grown in the kitchen garden is used for cooking in the café, or given to the community or volunteers, and the beds can look very inviting to excited dogs so keeping dogs on a lead in this area ensures the produce can continue to be enjoyed by the community and dog owners/walkers can still enjoy a stroll in the garden.
- In the formal garden dogs can dig the soil in the beds which can cause damage to the plants and require them to be replanted – dogs off-lead in this area can be disruptive to the beds themselves and volunteers undertaking gardening work.

It is an offence not to keep dogs on a lead in a designated area and failing to do so once the signage is in place incurs a risk of a £1000 fine.

We thank park users for walking their dogs responsibly and in consideration of others.

Monthly Photography Themes

If you ever take images in the park, even if they're not for our monthly photography themes, we would still love to see them and feature them in our newsletter so please don't forget to show us your snaps from your visit!

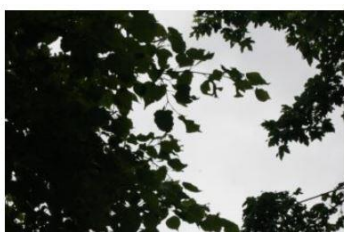
We welcome photographers of all abilities and ages to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes; **June's theme is: Wildflowers in Houghton Hall Park.** There is an abundance of wildflowers in the park at the moment, we can't wait to see what's captured this month.

Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 30th June 2019 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.

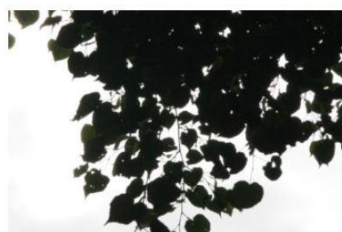
Below are the entries from May's theme: Silhouettes in Houghton Hall Park. This was a tricky one but we had some wonderful and imaginative entries!



Trina Cooke Silhouette Bird



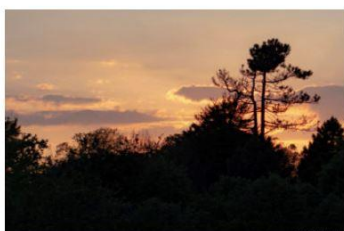
Silhouette 3 Malcolm Lea



Silhouette 2 Malcolm Lea



Silhouette Malcolm Lea



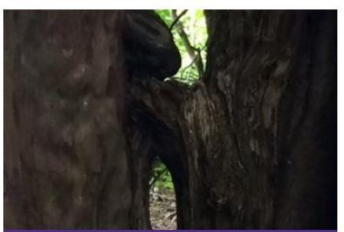
Jack Montague Sunset



Mysterious Animal Cindy Lea



Gateway Cindy Lea



Into The Light Cindy Lea

Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work:
http://houghtonhallpark.org/assets/documents/Photography_Theme_TCs-1.pdf

What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

For those of you that haven't passed by in a while you will be pleased to see how much everything is filling out and greening up. The ground is very dry though and it could do with a decent drop of rain!

The deep black/burgundy Iris (**Langpost wren**) have provided a wonderful show and as they are coming to an end the acid green bracts of *Alchemilla mollis* are pushing through alongside the deep carmine pink flowers on the *lychnis*.

All the roses are showing strong growth and buds galore so we will all be in for a wonderful riot of colour in the next few weeks.

Hopefully you will sit for a while in the garden and immerse yourself in our wonderful park.



Kitchen Garden

Thanks to a wonderful group of volunteers we are making such headway in the kitchen garden at the moment. Plants are being hardened off and planted out literally every day. The courgettes, pumpkins, cucumbers and marrows should be in the ground very soon which will fill Bed 3 entirely.

The runner beans have just emerged and in another week will be ready to go out. We have erected 3 large arches for them to climb up which span two beds.

Our herbs are slowly being added to their allocated spaces, first batch of sweetcorn is in the ground, broad beans fattening up and the potatoes flowering. Oh it's all happening now!



Bed 3 waiting for courgettes



Lettuces getting bigger



Sweetcorn newly planted



Onions fattening up



Our new arches for runner beans

Job of the month

This is a continuation of last month with continuing to sow small batches of herbs and lettuces so that as you harvest your next crop is ready to go out. Herbs such as coriander and basil will 'bolt' or run to seed quite quickly in the hot weather, so it is important to keep sowing fresh ones to replace them.

Keeping the weeds down is important so stop them taking vital water and nutrients from your plants.

It is also important to set your watering up to water first thing in the morning ideally. This allows the plants to dry and not sit damp where diseases can spread. It is also important to try to give plants in the ground a good soaking every few days then a sprinkle every day. This will mean they send down deeper roots and not become so reliant on the water and become very shallow rooted.

If plants in your greenhouse become dry and wilt they will often show signs of stress later by going to seed prematurely.

It is essential that you protect young seedlings from the sun's rays by putting up shading now in your greenhouse if you haven't already.

Plant of the month

The pot marigold may be a humble little plant but my it goes on and on all summer. Keep dead heading and you will have a compact plant that provides a wonderful source of nectar for pollinating insects, a wonderful companion plant in the kitchen garden and you can even eat the petals. They have a slightly spicy tang to them and work well with cream cheese or scattered over salads!

Once you have a plant you will soon recognise the self set seedlings on your bed the following year. Who can resist a free plant!

All the ones you will see in the kitchen garden are from a few plants I put in last year. Pop down and see their beauty!

A Big Thank you!

Our plant sales day on Friday was so well supported by you all, and I would like to thank everybody who attended and supported Silsoe Horticultural college and myself by purchasing some plants. The students were delighted at how welcoming you all were.

Due to the success of it, we will be having another one in the year and hopefully selling some of our home grown produce!

Happy Sowing!

Jenny



What a Wonderful Month for Wildlife

by Mark Hogan

At the start of this month I thought I would go along to Ashridge near Berkhamsted for a walk hoping to see the bluebells and hoping I was not too late to actually see them. I parked my car up near the Bridgewater monument and Cafe. I then strolled through the ferns and finally in front of me I saw a canopy of beautiful blue flowers. They really are beautiful and so colourful. I recommend you go and see them next year. I took loads of pictures of them, as the sun was shining it created a nice contrast in colour. I watched a pair of Jays chasing each other around, probably looking for a good place to create a nest for their young.



There are so many things to look out for in your gardens and surrounding areas, with most of the birds having young, you



see fluffy balls of feathers sitting on your bird table or in your gardens, mouth wide open creating a hell of noise to attract their parent's attention. The



birds do need our help this time of year, putting out a little food for them or hanging bird feeders up helps the parents to get food without searching for hours and getting nothing. Be it sunflower hearts, suet fat balls or an old scone or cake, they

will not mind.

Some birds have funny habits like a Carrion Crow in my mum's garden. It picks up bits of cake and bread and puts it into a bird bath to damp it down and make it easier to swallow. The bird bath looks like a soup by the time it has eaten most of it.

If you're a keen Birdwatcher like me, you will be pleased to know that this Summer a small group of White Tailed Eagles are going to be released on the Isle of Wight. Over 5 years at least 60 of them will be around. It is wonderful news because the only other ones are up in Scotland and that is an extremely long journey. I hope to go and see them at the end of the year.

Through my Birdwatching Group we had a great weekend away last week (Bank Holiday Weekend) to Yorkshire. A group of six of us booked a Hotel to go to a place called Bempton Cliffs, an RSPB reserve just south of Scarborough. It has a visitor centre and about seven platforms for you to watch the birds. What birds you see depends on the time of year. I went to see a small bird called a Puffin, I had never seen one before and I was not disappointed. At the first platform I stood and watched two of them on a ledge high up above the rocks, they are really stunning little things, the colourful beak, the red eyes and the big orange feet, it was worth the wait. The other birds flying around the cliffs were birds like Gannets, Kittiwakes, Razorbills and Guillemots. The astonishing thing is they sit on a piece of rock about 2 finger widths wide, 80ft up a cliff face and are comfortable doing so, they have webbed feet so how they do it, I do not know.



Of all the birds I saw that weekend, the Gannets were the most astonishing, they have yellow heads, blue eyes and white wings with a large black tip on each wing, they fly like a swift or swallow, around and around gliding, floating, swooping. I have a new favourite bird because of this, the Gannet. If you look on You Tube you can see videos of them diving into the sea to catch fish, they are just as graceful and fascinating doing that they are flying around the skies of Yorkshire.

I am not sure if any of you watch Springwatch, but if you do and you have a special visitors to

your garden and you want me to come along and have a look, bring my camera and take a few pictures and find out more then please get in touch. It would be a privilege for me to see something that you are really proud of, if you take a good picture send it to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and if it is good we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or put it in next month's newsletter.

Written and Photography by Mark Hogan

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm



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 hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



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LOTTERY FUNDED