

Houghton Hall Park

August 2022 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.



We are halfway through August and it has been a rather hot summer to say the least! It's been great to see the park busy but also people being sensible and not bringing their dogs out in the heat of the day. If you have been to the park recently you will have noticed that the grass is looking very dry and therefore very flammable, therefore we ask that you do not use disposable BBQs in the park, we would be devastated if anything should happen.

We still have lots of activities for the children for the remainder of the

summer holidays, our FREE trail 'Mystery of the Keys' is on until 4th September, Caroline Wilmott sent in these great photos of her children, Eryn and Conor, with the characters from the trail, at each stop you are able to take selfies on your smart phone. We also have Kidzone, a Jungle Adventure and the Buzz show on over the next couple of weeks, find out more in our 'What's On' pages.

The volunteers and Sue our gardener have been very busy in the gardens keeping on top of the watering and making sure we have lots of lovely produce, find out more in Sue's update. Eleanor, our ranger, has been running a number of craft and nature workshops for children which has kept her occupied this month. Mark, our volunteer, recently started keeping bees, this month he saw the fruit of his labour, find out more in his update. We also have a mouth-watering recipe for Carrot Tea Loaf from volunteer Irene.

Enjoy the weather while it lasts, see you in September!



A great place to live and work.

What's On

Mystery of the Secret Keys

When: Now until 4th September

Cost: Free!

Take part in our free, augmented reality storytrail around the park. Choose what happens, collect digital stamps, reveal the cute creatures and solve the mystery of the secret keys.

To learn more or start the trail, click [HERE](#)

Taking part in the storytrail is simple!

1. Visit the website to see the trail map
2. Visit each of the key locations
3. Scan their unique QR codes with your smartphone, choose what happens in the story and take a hilarious selfie with the character in AR
4. When you've found them all, download your free digital fun pack



When: Friday 19th August

Time: 10am to 4pm

Cost: £6 per child pre-book at <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/kidzone>

Schools out and it's time for the children to have some fun!

Book your space at Kidzone and enjoy:-

- Snowboard Simulator
- Pillow Bash
- Inflatables
- Zorb Body Balls
- Bungee Run
- Arts and Crafts
- Cookie Decorating

Sit back and relax for an hour while our fun experts entertain!

Tickets are £6 per child for an hour's session, minimum age 5, children need to be accompanied by an adult (no charge), tickets are non-refundable unless we cancel the event.

Jungle Adventure

When: Sunday 21st August

Time: 10am to 4pm

Cost: £6 per child pre-book at

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/jungle-adventure>

From the people that brought you the Pirates of Houghton Hall Park...

Join us on a 'Jungle Adventure' in the mystery of the missing bananas!

Help complete several challenges independently and as part of a team, break into the cave, fight through the jungle course, ride the wild bull, create jungle masks, join the jungle party and much more.

A 50min experience of interactive, immersive storytelling, fun, games & activities.

Suitable for children aged 3+, tickets are £6 per child and must be pre-booked, children must be accompanied by an adult (adults do not need to buy a ticket), tickets are non refundable unless we cancel the event.



Buzz - A Bee-riliant Adventure!

When: Wednesday 24th August

Time: 11.30am & 1pm

Cost: £4 per child, all children must be accompanied by an adult, suitable for ages 3+

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/buzz-a-bee-riliant-adventure>

Join Billy Bumble in our formal gardens as he shrinks down to bee-size and learns about the troubles that they face. Featuring spell-binding puppetry and a giant honeycomb set, join us for a whirlwind ride, avoiding grumpy Mr Fred and the gaping jaws of Shredder the dog! Buzz finishes with the audience being given wildflower seeds, to plant and help our black and yellow friends to flourish.

Created by award-winning puppetry and theatre company, Smoking Apples.

£4 per child, children must be accompanied by an adult, suitable for age 3+.

The ticket price includes our wildlife rubbing trail, you can also design your own magnifying glass (additional charge).



Dog Festival

When: Sunday 11th September

Time: 10am to 4pm

Cost: Free to attend £2 per class for the fun dog show

Save the date, the dog festival is back!

We can't wait to have the Dog Festival back in the park this year, there will be our ever popular dog show, agility demos and have a go, plus lots of doggy stalls!

Accolade Hounds will be hosting the fun dog show again for us this year, there will be two rings, one for small dogs and one for big dogs, keep an eye out on our social media and website for more information.

If you would like a stall at this event to sell dog related items or raise money for a dog charity you can now book this online click here: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/event-stalls>



Friends of Houghton Hall Park Kitchen Garden Plant & Produce Sale



When: Every Thursday in the Kitchen Garden and the Visitors Centre

Time: 9.30am to 2pm (times may vary)

Cost: Donations to Friends of Houghton Hall Park

Weather permitting, our popular plant and produce stall will be back in the Kitchen Garden every Thursday, the range we have to offer will slowly grow over the coming weeks, including any spare plants we have. Thank you to everyone who supports us, as all the money raised is invested back into the gardens through the Friends of

Houghton Hall Park group. The table is usually set up ready for 9.30am, giving us time to freshly pick and prepare everything earlier in the morning.

Monthly Photography Themes

We welcome photographers of all abilities to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly theme.

August's theme is: 'Light in Houghton Hall Park' consider how you can capture light effectively e.g. shadows, sun shining from behind a cloud, light coming in between the leaves in woodland area, we would love to see what you capture. Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st August 2022 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.

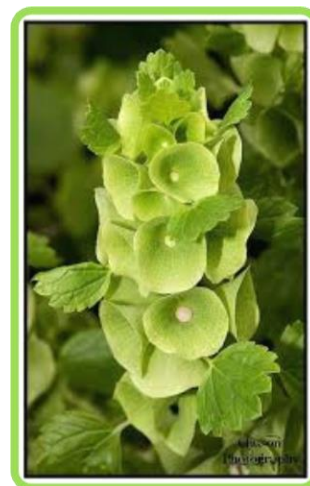
Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work:

www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography



Plant of the Month – Bells of Ireland

Bells of Ireland come from the Labiatae (mint) family and their botanical name is *Molucella Laevis*, an annual flowering plant that was first cultivated in Belgium in the late 1500's. Bells of Ireland don't actually grow in Ireland. They come from Syria and other eastern Mediterranean countries. Their name comes from the luscious green shade of its leaves and they are known in Ireland to represent luck and prosperity. Their meaning "*Good Luck, Luck be With You*" makes them a favourite flower for weddings and Saint Patrick's Day. The flowers are dainty white bell-shaped buds surrounded by luscious green foliage and popular in flower arrangements. However, the stems have tiny prickly thorns and gloves are recommended when caring for them. **The stems are** hollow and can be dried but to keep their shape a wire should be inserted into the stem after drying.



These flowers are phototropic which means they bend towards the light.

Irene Copperwheat

Houghton Hall Park Volunteer

Community Park Ranger Update

Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.

Wow July has flown by. I hope you've all stayed safe and cool in this hot weather we have had.

This month we've been doing some work in the gardens helping to keep them watered and trying our best to keep things looking neat and tidy. We've done things such as flower arranging and also saved a massive sunflower that was stooping due to the weight of the head. The gardens are looking fantastic and its thanks to the hard work of the volunteers.



Due to the red weather warning and high heats of 40 degrees this month's volunteer session was cancelled.



This month I've been running holiday activities such as pop bottle rockets, clay creatures, dreamcatchers, mini beast hunting and pond dipping. These events have gone really well and all the kids had a great time!

I've also been doing some work in the car park this month and repainted the arrows in the car park to try and encourage people to drive round the car park the right way. Hopefully this will make the car park a safer place for drives and pedestrians.

Stay safe for the rest of the summer and I'm sure I'll see you round the park soon!

Eleanor

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

As many of you will be aware, I am a novice beekeeper having set up a new hive at the end of March and this month my Nature Notes are about the honey harvest.

Having visited other hives early in the season, I wasn't very confident that my bees were going to produce much honey. The other hives I visited seemed to have many more active bees and were having second supers added to the hives. Supers are the sections above the brood chamber and queen excluder that contain the frames you hope the bees will store lots of honey. Excluding the queen from these frames, stops any of the cells being used for egg laying. It's not unusual to have half a dozen supers on a hive which would contain around sixty frames. As it turned out I needn't have worried. Although slow to get going, I'm pleased with what I have collected so far, around 7lbs from just the six frames I have taken.



Frames in the hive full of honey



The bees will be gently brushed off the frame before taking the honey

I have taken two batches of three frames over a fortnight. The cells containing honey are on both sides of the frame, so I uncap one side at a time and spin the honey out, repeating the process for the other side. From the start through to bottling it is, as you can imagine, a very sticky process and the honey starts flowing as soon as you begin to remove the wax cap covering each cell, this is why I decided to do the extraction in the garden. Once both sides of the frames have been spun, they are removed and the extraction tank is left for a few hours to allow the honey to collect in the bottom of the tank. As honey is then drained from the tank into a small bucket, it is passed through a double sieve to remove any pieces of wax released during the spinning process. Before it can be bottled, the moisture content must be determined. If this is too high the honey will be prone to fermentation in the bottle. To do this a small sample of the filtered honey is placed in a refractometer, the ideal moisture content being between 17%-20%.



Removing the wax capping



The frame is placed into the honey extractor



Three frames ready for extracting



Spinning the honey out of the frames



The honey is passed through a double filter



The final product – pure honey

The bees will need some honey left in the hive to see them through winter, but I may be able to get another couple of pounds before the end of the month.

As we move towards autumn the number of bees in the hive will fall, the queen gradually stops laying eggs and the colony prepares for winter. But looking back over the last couple of months, I consider I have been lucky with my first season as a beekeeper. Firstly, my bees are extremely calm, a trait for which Buckfast bees are noted for. I hardly had to use the smoker when inspecting the hive. Secondly, they didn't attempt to swarm, something novices like me worry about. Swarming was one of the major topics of the bee keeping course I did earlier in the year and something we were told would more than likely happen. Nor have I had problems with disease and thankfully feel I have a good colony for going into next year's season.

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens.

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Houghton Hall Park Community Gardener



It's been another busy month in the gardens, with lots of planting and lovely produce to pick each week. The super-hot weather has really been challenging for both the Kitchen Garden and the Formal Garden and at times for us gardeners too!

With the school summer holidays it has been lovely to see so many more visitors. The children's area now has nice brightly painted benches

and chalk boards for our younger visitors.

Each Thursday the volunteers have been arriving early to pick and prepare the produce and beautiful cut flowers for sale in the Friends of Houghton Hall Produce Hut. This has proved very popular with people visiting the park.

Eleanor, our Park Ranger, and her team of volunteers have been a great help lending a hand on a Thursday and have taken on a wide variety of tasks.

Over the next few weeks, we will be spending time out in the formal garden, tidying the beds and preparing them ready for the next season.



There is always lots of work going on and already we are looking forward to next year and deciding what will be grown in the gardens and what themes we will have on the story-telling bed.

It's been a really great month with lots of sunny weather and hopefully this lovely weather will continue into September...

Until next time...

Sue



Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

To use from - The Garden:
Carrots



Carrot Tea Loaf

Ingredients:

A little butter or sunflower oil for greasing
200g light muscovado sugar
4 large eggs separated
200g finely grated carrot
Finely grated zest and juice of a lemon
100g raisins
100g ground almonds
200g SR flour
A pinch of sea salt
1 tsp of ground cinnamon
A generous grating of nutmeg

Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 170° gas mark 3. Lightly grease a 20x10cm loaf tin and line with baking parchment. Using an electric whisk beat the sugar and egg yolks together until pale and creamy 2-3 minutes. Stir in the carrot, lemon zest and juice, raisins and almonds. Sift the flour, salt and spices over the mixture and fold in with a metal spoon. In a large clean bowl whisk the egg whites until they form soft peaks. Stir in a heaped tablespoonful of the egg white to the mixture to loosen a little, then carefully fold in the rest. Tip the mixture into the prepared tin and cook for about an hour or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for ten minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Irene Copperwheat – HH Park Volunteer



Become a volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of giving something back to your local community? 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 Volunteers of Houghton Hall Park, please email hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Mon – Sun 9am to 4pm



Central Bedfordshire Council



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