

# Houghton Hall Park

## December 2021 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.

Welcome to the newsletter for December, we are only in the middle of the month but we have been very busy in the park in the build up to Christmas. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December we had a very festive day in the park, there was a reindeer trail and the big man himself, Santa, in residence for the children to visit, his reindeer were also here having a rest before the big day. To top the day off we had some festive stalls, the weather on the day wasn't the best but we had a great turnout and a lot of Christmas presents were bought (especially by the HHP team!). A huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped out on the day, these events would not be able to go ahead without their help. The festive wreath kits have now all been collected and we are looking forward to seeing your finished creations, send your photos to [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk), the photos we have already received are on the next page.



Talking of crafts, Eleanor our Park Ranger is running a workshop to make willow angels on 17<sup>th</sup> December, if you would like to book on there are still a couple of spaces left, details can be found on our 'What's On' pages.



Jenny has also been busy getting crafty with the volunteers in the garden, you can see what they have been doing all year with a collection of photographs in her update this month.

Mark, our volunteer has written a very interesting article on how you can help the wildlife in your garden this time of year and he has also put together some Christmas fun and games for the children (and adults!) to enjoy.

We hope you have a healthy and happy Christmas!

**A great place to live and work.**

## Festive wreaths to bring you some cheer!

This year the HHP team and our wonderful volunteers put together and sold over a hundred festive wreath kits to make at home, these were collected at our Christmas event on December 5<sup>th</sup> and we have already received great photos of the finished articles, we certainly have some very talented people in our community!



## What's On

# Willow Angel Workshop

**When:** Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December

**Time:** 10am & 1.30pm

**Cost:** £15

Using traditional techniques that are used for basket weaving create your own Christmas decoration under the instruction of Park Ranger Eleanor. The session will be inside and up to two people can work on one angel. No experience or tools needed, everything you will need will be provided and by the end of the session you will have your very own angel to take home.



## Christmas Day Parkrun?



Christmas day Parkrun anyone? Houghton Hall Parkrun are looking for volunteers so they can run an event on Christmas day (that's dedication!), if you are interested please email them at [houghtonhall@parkrun.com](mailto:houghtonhall@parkrun.com)

If you would like to take part but have not run before you will need to register at [www.parkrun.org.uk](http://www.parkrun.org.uk)

Events take place at 9am every Saturday.

## Your Views on the Park

As you may know the regeneration of Houghton Hall Park has taken place thanks to Heritage Lottery/Parks for People funding, the lottery project will be coming to an end in 2022 and an evaluation is currently taking place to see if we have met the original aims, if you are a park user we would love you to take part in a survey to let us know your thoughts, you can find the survey using the link below:

<https://s.surveypal.com/3viCKzBAf>

## New Menu for the Café!

The cafe now has a new hot food menu which includes a full English and vegan options, yummy!

They will be open every day over the festive season, normal hours, apart from Christmas day where they will be open 11am-1pm offering free drinks for anyone that needs one. You can view the full menu on the following page.



Really Awesome  
**Coffee**

## Hot Food

BACON BAP	£3.00
SAUSAGE BAP	£3.00
VEGAN / VEGGIE BAP	£3.00
ADD EGG / HASH BROWN	50p
FULL ENGLISH	£5.90
BACON, SAUSAGE, EGG, HASH BROWNS, BEANS, MUSHROOMS, TOMATOES, TOAST	
VEGAN / VEGETARIAN OPTIONS AVAILABLE	
SAUSAGE ROLLS	£2.20
VEGAN MEXICAN BEAN ROLL	£2.50
SOUP OF THE DAY WITH BREAD ROLL	£3.00
JACKET POTATO	
BUTTER	£2.50
CHEESE, BEANS, TUNA MAYO	£3.50
ADD A TOPPING	70p
TOASTED TEA CAKE	£2.00

## Frappes & Iced Drinks

### Frappes - £3.80

Blended with our signature  
#1 espresso blend

COFFEE  
MOCHA  
CARAMEL  
WHITE MOCHA

### Smoothies - £3.80

Ice cold and delicious

BERRY GO ROUND  
PASH 'N' SHOOT  
STRAWBERRY SPLIT

### Milkshakes - £3.80

Create your own or choose  
from below

CHOCOLATE  
STRAWBERRY  
BANANA  
VANILLA

### Iced Drinks - £3.80

Have your favourite hot drink - Iced!

CARAMEL LATTE  
AMERICANO

## Coffees

	R	L
LATTE	£3.00	£3.20
VANILLA LATTE (OTHER FLAVOURS AVAILABLE)	£3.50	£3.70
CAPPUCCINO	£3.00	£3.20
HAZELNUT CAPPUCCINO (OTHER FLAVOURS AVAILABLE)	£3.50	£3.70
MOCHA	£3.20	£3.60
CARAMEL MOCHA	£3.70	£4.10
WHITE MOCHA	£3.20	£3.60
CARAMEL MACCHIATO	£3.50	£3.70
AMERICANO	£2.90	£3.10
FLAT WHITE	one size	£2.90
ESPRESSO	double	£2.30
ESPRESSO MACCHIATO / CORTADO	double	£2.50

## Not Coffees

	R	L
SPICED CHAI LATTE	£3.00	£3.20
MATCHA GREEN TEA LATTE	£3.00	£3.20
DELUX HOT CHOCOLATE	£3.50	£3.70
WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE	£3.00	£3.20
HOT CHOCOLATE	£3.00	£3.20
TEA (A SELECTION OF TEAS)	£1.80	£2.00

(Decaf and alternative milks available, please ask your barista)

## Make it your own...



Skinny or Soy Milk  
FREE



Alternative Milk  
FREE



Espresso Shot  
50p



Flavoured Syrup  
50p



Marsh Mallows  
50p



Squirly Cream  
50p

## Simply Waffles

SELECT ONE TOPPING FROM:

MAPLE SYRUP CINNAMON HONEY NUTELLA WHITE CHOCOLATE SAUCE  
MILK CHOCOLATE SAUCE STRAWBERRY SAUCE CARAMEL SAUCE

FRESH FRUIT OPTIONS +50p Each

BANANAS STRAWBERRIES BLUEBERRIES

ADD CREAM OR ICE CREAM +70p Each EXTRA TOPPINGS +50p Each

1 Waffle for £2.80

**DOUBLE STACKED WAFFLE +£1.20**

ADD AN EXTRA WAFFLE TO EITHER THE SIMPLE OR DELUXE WAFFLES

## Deluxe Waffles

1 Waffle for £4.80

FOREST OF FRUITS BISCOFF  
KINDER BANOFFEE

**SEE BLACKBOARD BY TILL  
FOR ALL SPECIALS**

# Monthly Photography Themes

Art & Culture

Event

Central Bedfordshire

great lifestyles

**December's Photography Theme**

'Feeling Festive' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in December
- Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at: [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)
- Deadline 31st December
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

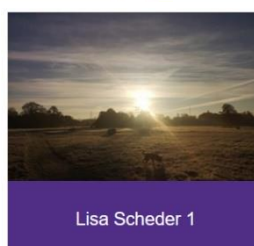
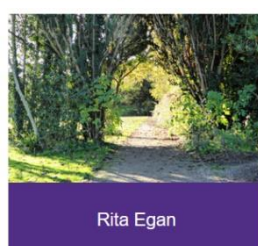
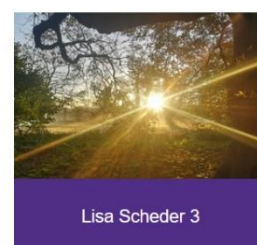
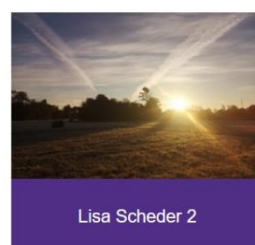
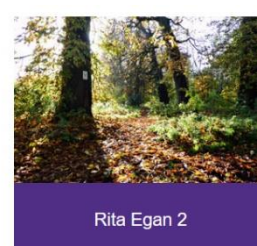
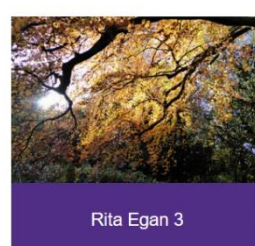
LOTTERY FUNDED

We welcome photographers of all abilities to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly theme. December's theme is: 'Feeling Festive at Houghton Hall Park' we would love to see what you capture, maybe it will be some memories from one of our Christmas events or a festive parkrun and Christmas day walkies, there's lots to choose from this month! Please send your submissions to [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

The images must be taken between 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 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](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography)

November's theme was 'November Sun in Houghton Hall Park' thank you to everyone who sent us in their photos this month.



## Community Ranger Update

*Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.*

Well the year is just flying by isn't it, November was a good month with the weather being remarkably warm.

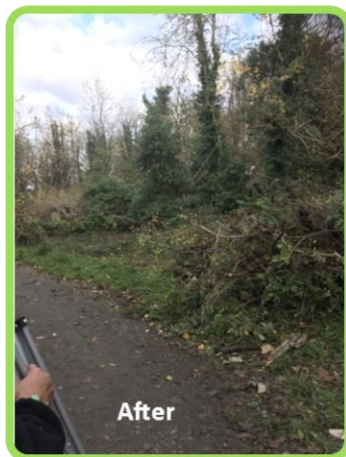
During November I had a group from Groundwork come along and do some volunteering in the park. They came along for four Tuesdays in a row and did several different tasks from coppicing, to bulb planting, some clearance work along with some learning about tree ID, how to take a cutting, how to use a strimmer and much more! For the last session we went out and collected foliage and the group had a great time creating some Christmas wreaths.



This month's volunteer session consisted of clearance work in the East woodland in preparation for some tree planting in the new year (hopefully in February or March.) This area of the woodland had some tree work done last year. Three big sycamore trees had to come down due to disease leaving a large area open. Along with the elms that have Dutch elm disease the area is rather open so perfect for tree planting.



Before



After



After

During November we have also had a group from Chiltern school come along once a week to volunteer. They've done things such as litter picking, coppicing and foliage collection for Christmas wreaths.

As always what we do in the park would not be possible without the help of our fantastic volunteers and groups that get involved in the park so thank you for everyone involved.

Have a fantastic December, enjoy Christmas and stay safe and well,

Eleanor!

## Nature Notes

*Words and photographs by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.*

As we head into the festive season and the end of another year, it is time to reflect on the past twelve months as well as looking forward to the future. As ever nature and wildlife need our help, particularly during the cold winter months. If you are a regular reader of the newsletter, you will gather I feed all the creatures that come into my garden as well as trying to provide a suitable habitat to maintain a balance of nature. My aim is to create a haven for the predator insects that help protect my plants and food sources for the birds, such as the varieties of tits that help keep the greenfly at bay. By doing so I avoid having to resort to chemical control. I also have the pleasure of seeing a diverse range of wildlife in the garden.



*A squirrel finds an easier way to the peanuts.*

If you are looking for ideas to help nature over the holiday period also



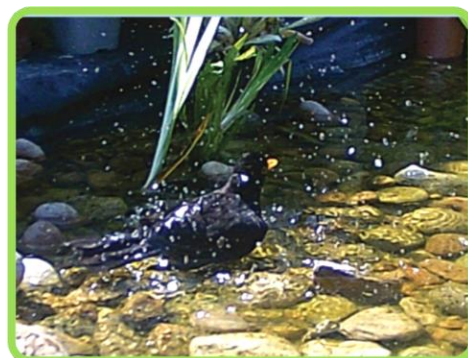
*Help the birds with high protein food.*

including some family fun, The Wildlife Trust is running 'Go Wild for Christmas' with '12 Days Wild' for full details go to [30dayswild@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:30dayswild@wildlifetrusts.org) The idea is you do one thing for each of the 12 days between December 25<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January. When you sign up you'll receive inspiration for wild, wintery activities such as making ice decorations, eco-friendly crackers, and helping wildlife in winter. Here are a few ideas to start you off. Feeding the birds, to help them keep warm, birds need to maintain fat levels, you can make your own fat cake or balls as one of your daily projects.

I use lard mixed with a variety of seeds and mealworms, sometimes including toasted bread crumbs and grated cheese. The amount of each ingredient isn't critical, but if you add too much there may not be enough fat content to bind it together and the cakes fall apart when you put them out in the

garden. My mixes vary quite a bit between batches.

Although lard is soft if you put your creations in the freezer they will be hard enough to handle. For fat cakes I press the mixture into butter cartons filling each to about half depth. Fat balls I chill the mixture to firm it up and use an ice cream scoop, before completing the ball shape with my hands. I then place them in cartons in the freezer. Keeping a fresh supply of water is also extremely important as a lot of water sources freeze overnight, so birds and animals can't have a drink or bathe.



*Make sure birds and animals have access to water in winter.*

If you have some spare time on your hands over the holidays, now is a good time to be thinking of spring. Making a bird box and putting it up now will let birds know it's available and you have a better chance it will get used. I've included a plan for a box at the end of this article. Notes to consider when positioning your bird box. Birds have lots of predators, from both

domestic and wild animals, to other birds taking either the eggs or chicks. Therefore, if you want to get them to take up residence, there are a few factors to consider, so that they feel safe. The area in front of the box should be free of obstacles so birds can fly directly to their nest. The height from the ground and the direction a box faces also needs careful thought. It needs to be in a place out of direct sun so it doesn't heat up like an oven. It should also be placed so that the front is sheltered from driving rain. If you can, it is best to locate the box is facing anywhere between north and east. As for height above ground, this will vary between species. Robins and wrens prefer to nest below 2 metres (6.5 feet). House and tree sparrows like nests above 2 metres (6.5 feet) Blue and great tits are happy nesting anywhere between 1 and 5 metres (3-15 feet). Starlings above 2.5 metres (8 feet).

Birds also have preferences for the size of hole in the nest box. Robins, pied wagtails and wrens tend to nest in open boxes hidden amongst vegetation, as do blackbirds. Even so the height of the front panel matters. Wrens like the front of the box 140mm high. For robins and pied wagtails the front should be 100mm high.

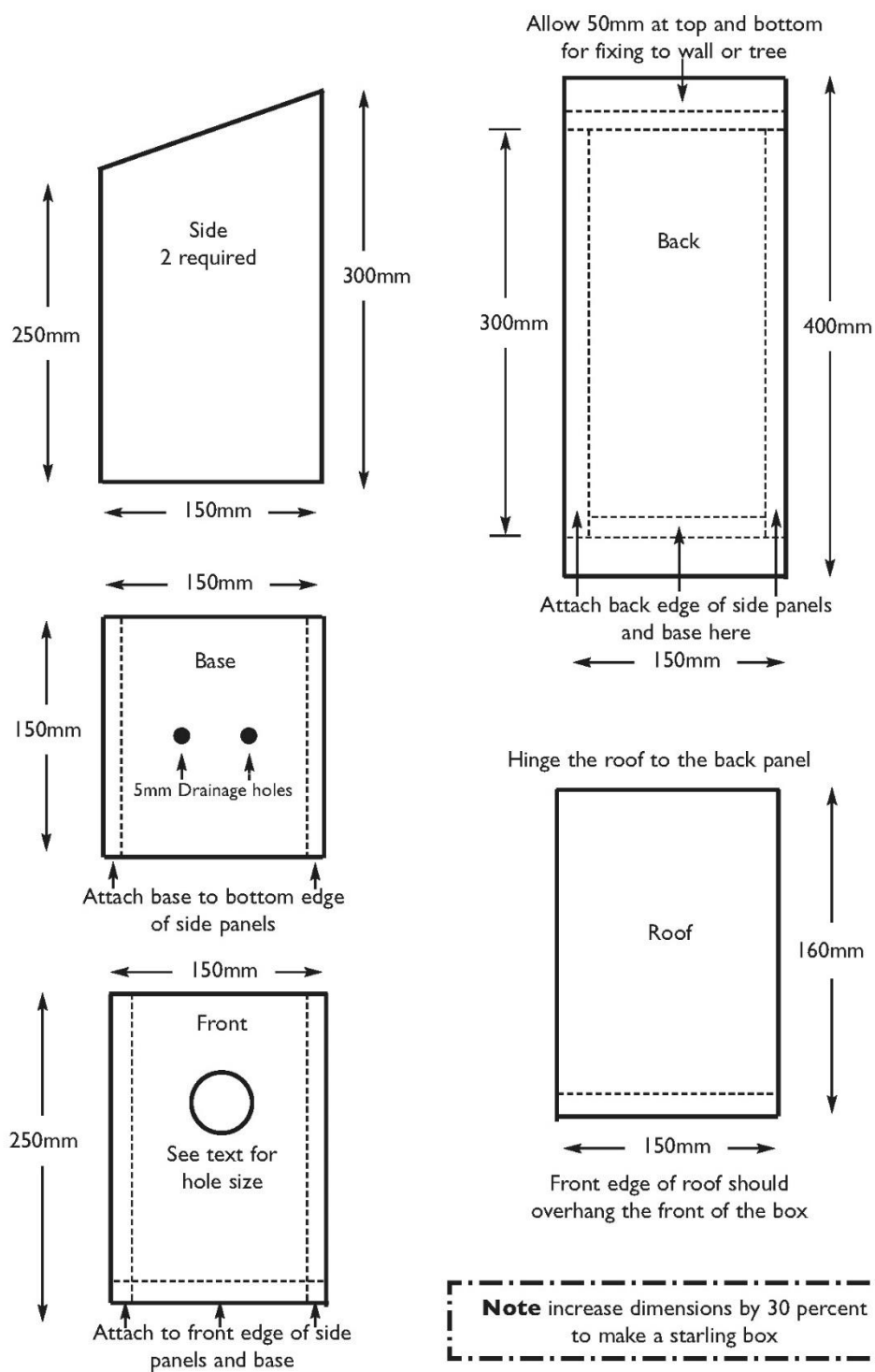
If you are making a typical type box, the entrance hole should be 25mm for blue and coal tits. 28mm for great tits and tree sparrows. 32mm for house sparrows. 45mm for starlings. Finally the distance between the floor of the nest and the hole also varies between species. House sparrow 38mm. Blue tits 50 -150mm. Tree sparrows, Great tits and Starlings 150 – 200mm When constructing your box the area below the hole on the inside should be rough, so the young chicks can climb up when they are ready to leave the nest.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and safe and prosperous New Year.

Until next time

Mark  
Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

### Plans for a simple bird box



# Christmas Fun and Games!

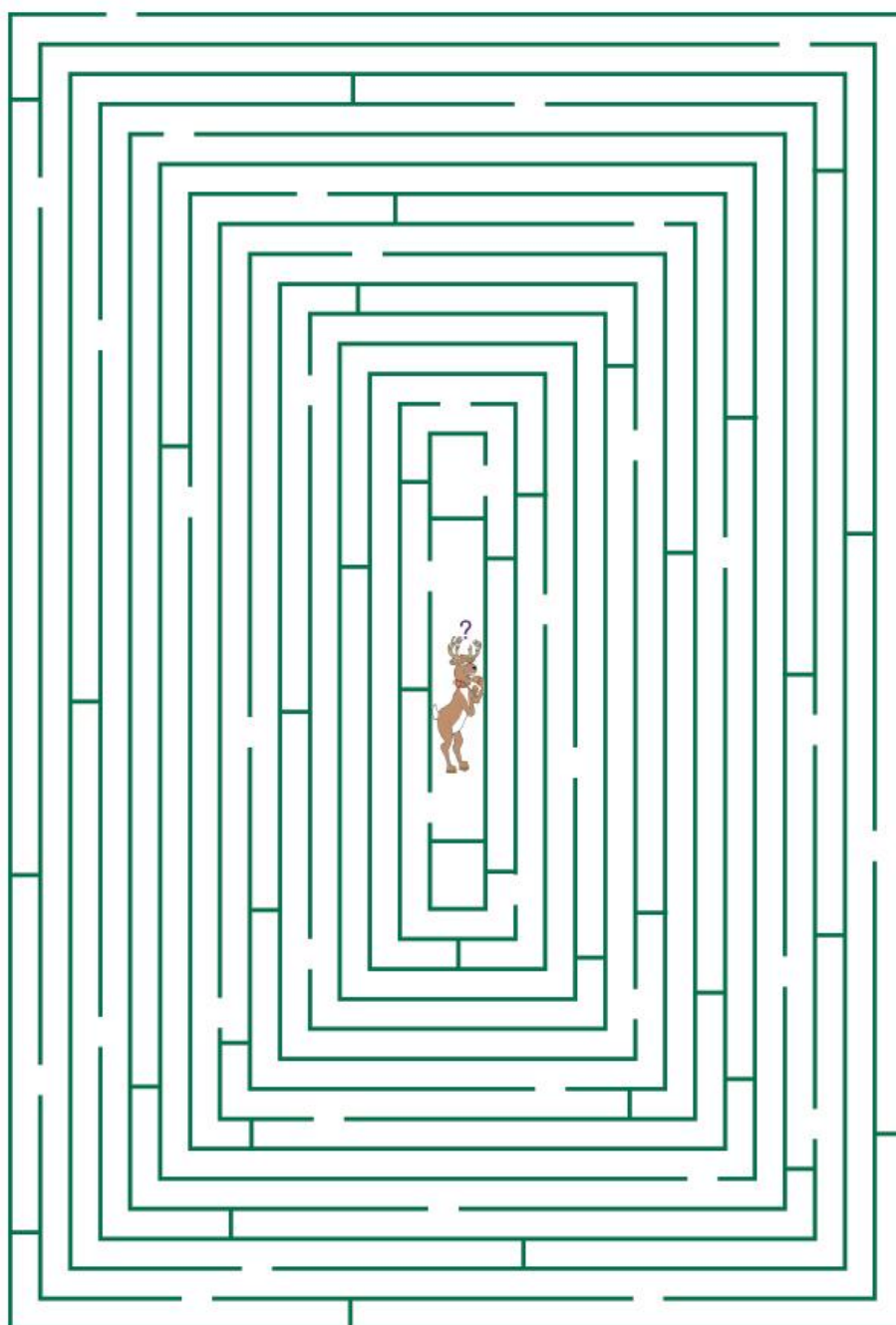
by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

## Help Santa Find His Missing Reindeer



Santa has left Dancer, one of his reindeer behind. He is calling her, but some of the gates are closed and Dancer isn't sure which way to go.

Can you show Dancer how to get back to Santa?





## WORD SEARCH



Try And Find The 20 Words On The Left, Hidden In The Grid

The Words Run Vertically or Horizontally Only  
Some Words Are Spelt Backwards



Santa  
Tree  
Angel  
Present  
Carols  
Holly  
Wreath  
Ivy  
Yule  
Star  
Robin  
Berry  
Turkey  
Lights  
Candle  
Toys  
Games  
Mince Pies  
Elf  
Snow

A	Q	A	Y	E	K	R	U	T	P	A	B
D	S	A	N	T	A	F	H	I	V	Y	A
G	U	W	J	R	Q	B	C	D	E	U	W
A	S	R	V	E	A	E	A	A	C	L	O
M	T	E	U	E	N	R	R	P	Q	E	N
E	H	A	F	L	E	R	O	R	A	X	S
S	G	T	X	O	N	Y	L	E	G	N	A
K	I	H	A	R	A	T	S	S	A	S	I
A	L	A	C	A	N	D	L	E	S	Y	N
G	Y	L	L	O	H	A	S	N	A	O	W
I	M	R	O	B	I	N	A	T	A	T	O
K	F	S	E	I	P	E	C	N	I	M	A

A few Christmas Cracker Riddles  
Two for children and one for Adults



Why are Christmas trees bad at knitting?

What gets wetter the more it dries?



How Many new words can you make from the word 'Starting'  
with each new word 1 letter shorter than the previous?



## Mirror Image



The Right hand image should be a mirror image of the one on the left  
But there are 8 differences between them for you to find

You can colour the picture in too

# Naughty Mice

Santa is having trouble with some mice

Perhaps you would like to colour in the images and make up a story about the mice



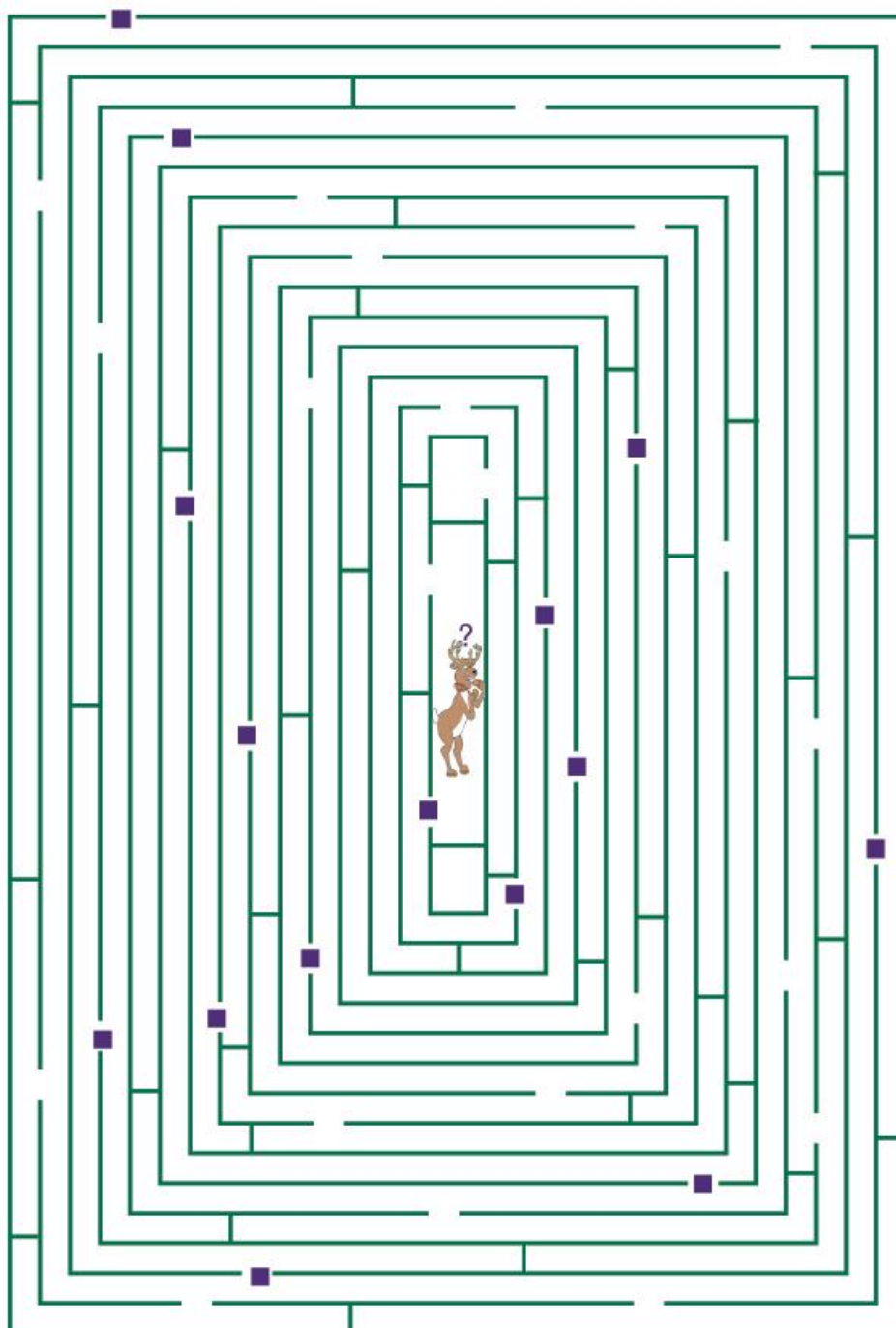
# Answers

## Help Santa Find His Missing Reindeer



Santa has left Dancer, one of his reindeer behind. He is calling her, but some of the gates are closed and Dancer isn't sure which way to go.

Can you show Dancer how to get back to Santa?



The purple squares indicate the correct open gates

## ANSWERS



## WORD SEARCH



Try And Find The 20 Words On The Left, Hidden In The Grid

The Words Run Vertically or Horizontally Only  
Some Words Are Spelt Backwards



Santa  
Tree  
Angel  
Present  
Carols  
Holly  
Wreath  
Ivy  
Yule  
Star  
Robin  
Berry  
Turkey  
Lights  
Candle  
Toys  
Games  
Mince Pies  
Elf  
Snow

A	Q	A	Y	E	K	R	U	T	P	A	B
D	S	A	N	T	A	F	H	I	V	Y	A
G	U	W	J	R	Q	B	C	D	E	U	W
A	S	R	V	E	A	E	A	A	C	L	O
M	T	E	U	E	N	R	R	P	Q	E	N
E	H	A	F	L	E	R	O	R	A	X	S
S	G	T	X	O	N	Y	L	E	G	N	A
K	I	H	A	R	A	T	S	S	A	S	I
A	L	A	C	A	N	D	L	E	S	Y	N
G	Y	L	L	O	H	A	S	N	A	O	W
I	M	R	O	B	I	N	A	T	A	T	O
K	F	S	E	I	P	E	C	N	I	M	A

A few Christmas Cracker Riddles  
Two for children and one for Adults



Why are Christmas trees bad at knitting?  
Because they keep dropping their needles!!

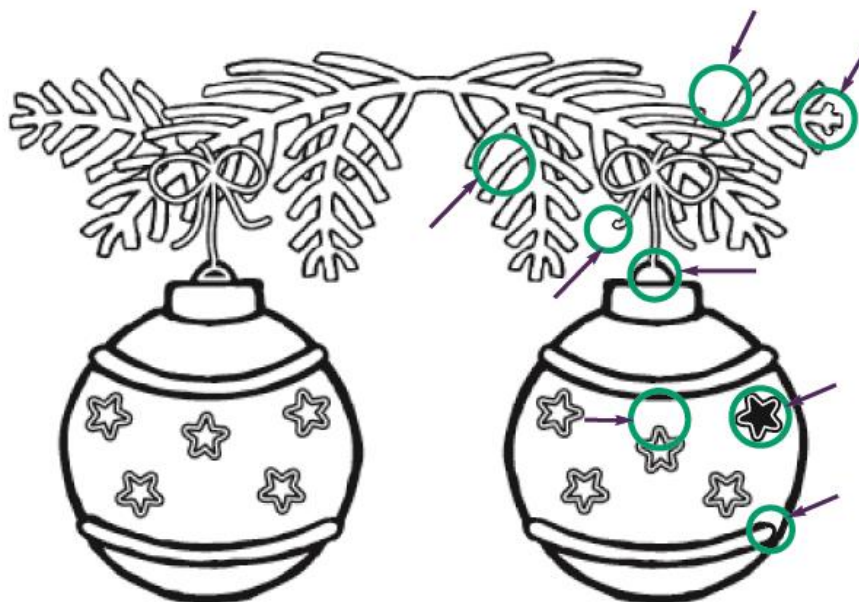
What gets wetter the more it dries?  
A Towel



How Many words can you make from the word 'Starting'  
with each new word 1 letter shorter than the previous?  
Starting-Staring-String-Sting-Sing-Sin-In-I



## Mirror Image



The Right hand image should be a mirror image of the one on the left  
But there are 8 differences between them for you to find

You can colour the picture in too

# What's the latest in the Gardens?

*By Jenny Osborne, Community Gardener*

## Where did 2021 go?

Earlier this week I was talking with some of my volunteers about how we started this year. We had just entered lock down and everything was feeling very flat indeed. Knowing we were entering a cold and difficult period we planned to make our working area flow better for us by adding in sink washing, hand washing and more covered spaces. It was within a few weeks of this plan that the snow hit, and I have some very amusing pictures of us trying to clear the snow away from the areas we were working in



It is only when you take the time out to reflect in the year that you realise how much has been achieved.

Month on month small amendments and improvements are achieved which contribute to the bigger picture of the garden.

Our most dramatic change must be the pond as this area was a very rough piece of ground when I first arrived but now has a focus and a purpose.



I have tried to select some photos which represent our year and celebrate all the fun we have had as a community garden. As we head into uncertain times again, I am grateful for all the friendship and kindness that is expressed from volunteers and park visitors.

I would like to take the time to wish you and your families a healthy and peaceful festive period and look forward to seeing you in the New year.

Our work slows down outside but we will continue to mulch, rake leaves and tidy the garden over the next few weeks. Behind the scenes planning a growing programme and entering data into spread sheets will keep me busy for the next few weeks!

So, all there is for me to say is; may 2022 look bright and may crops grow in abundance!!

Until next time

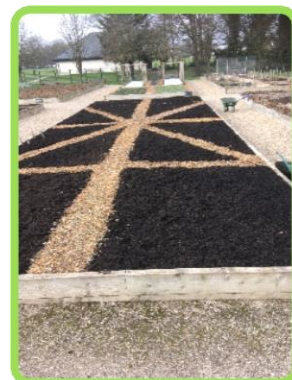
Take care

From Jenny and all the garden volunteers

## January



## February



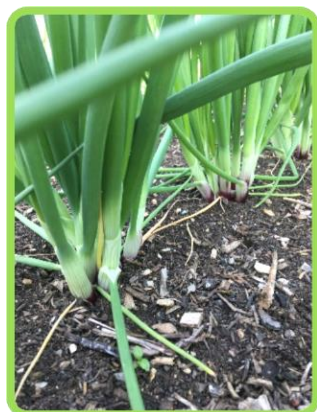
## March



## April



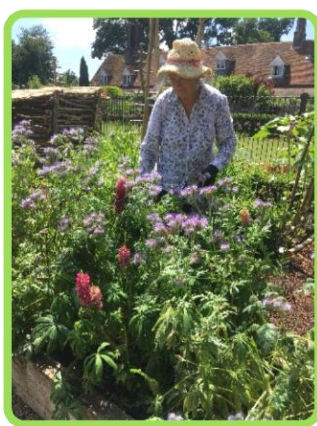
## May



## June



## June continued.....



## July



## July continued.....



## August

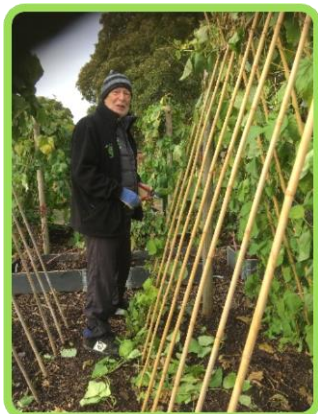




## September



## October



## November



## December



## Plant of the month – Christmas Rose

The Christmas Rose (*Helleborus Niger*) is a small perennial of the Buttercup family, it blooms from late Autumn to early spring often in the snow. Niger – meaning black refers to the colour of the roots. It has evergreen compound leaves, of seven or more leaflets arranged like the fingers on a hand, that arise directly on leafstalks from the crown of the plant. The striking flowers, of five coloured sepals, are whitish to pinkish green, and appear during the winter, often at Christmas as it is completely unaffected by snow or frost. The plants should be handled with care as can be an irritant to the skin. The flower represents Purity.

Irene Copperwheat  
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer



## Keep in touch

### Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

### Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

### Twitter

@BedsCountryside

### Website

[www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

### Email

[hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Current Opening Times

Mon – Sun 9am to 5pm



## 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](mailto:hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



Central  
Bedfordshire  
Council



LOTTERY FUNDED