

Houghton Hall Park

May 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.

It's May, produce and plants are springing up in the kitchen garden and we have enough surplus to hold our first produce sale this Thursday! There are a number of new events and activities taking place in the park this month, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon trail is up in the park for you to enjoy and we'll also be holding some kids Jubilee arts and craft sessions in half term. Talking of art, we are pleased to be working with Colour & Craft Art Parties who will be hosting 'Paint your Masterpiece' workshops in the Visitors Centre on 28th May, the Houghton Hall Park team were lucky to attend the 'Wildflowers' workshop at the beginning of the month and couldn't believe what they produced in two hours. Hayley, the Activity Officer, said 'This was such a lovely workshop, Charly, the instructor, provides you with clear instructions and everything you need along with a freedom to create something truly unique.



Hayley's 'Masterpiece'



I hadn't painted since A-level but the workshop reminded me how much I enjoy it and how being creative is great for mindfulness, I would thoroughly recommend the class.' More details about these events can be found in the 'What's On' section. It's World bee day on Friday 20th May which is apt as Mark, our volunteer, has written all about bees in his nature article along with stunning photos of his own bee hive, he has also provided us with all the news from the gardens. Eleanor has been busy with her volunteers, giving a neglected piece of the park some tlc, you can find out where in her update. The plant of the month is the Allium, these are blooming in the park at the moment, can you guess where they are?

A great place to live and work.

What's On

Kitchen Garden Plant & Produce Sale



When: Thursday 19th May

Time: 9.30am to 2pm

Cost: Donations to Friends of Houghton Hall Park

Weather permitting, our popular plant and produce stall will be back in the Kitchen Garden this 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. Excitingly if all goes to plan we are hoping to be able to take card payments, as well as cash. The table is usually set up ready for 9.30am, giving us time to freshly pick and prepare everything earlier in the morning.

'Paint your Masterpiece' Workshops



When: Saturday 28th May

Time: Children's session 2pm & Adult session 7pm

Cost: £25 children & £30 adult

We are pleased to announce that Colour and Craft Art Parties will be hosting 'Paint Your Masterpiece' workshops

at the park this year, with step by step in person direction you will create something beautiful!

Two workshops will be available on Saturday 28th May, one for children 'Spring Blossom' and one for adults 'Wildflowers', no experience is necessary and all materials will be provided, during the workshop you will learn various techniques to produce a painting that you can truly be proud of. This is the perfect activity to enjoy with friends whilst learning a new skill. Members of the Houghton Hall Park team were lucky enough to participate in one of the sessions and were really impressed with what they produced in the two hours, Hayley the Activity Officer said 'this was such a lovely workshop, Charly, the instructor, provides you with clear instructions and everything you need along with a freedom to create something truly unique. I hadn't painted since A-level but the workshop reminded me how much I enjoy it and how being creative is great for mindfulness, I would thoroughly recommend the class.'



The workshops will take place in the Lime room of the Visitors Centre and cost £25 for child and £30 for adults which includes expert tuition, the canvas and all equipment. To book go to:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/events>

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon Trail

When: Starts Saturday 30th April until Sunday 12th June

Time: 10am

Cost: Free!

As part of local plans to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, from April 30th until June 12th, Houghton Hall Park has teamed up with High Street Safari to run a free story-trail. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon Trail is located at seven stops around the park. Families will be guided on their trip by Sir Barnaby Beacon as he visits seven memorable and magical friends, like Charlie Crown or Theadora Throne, who have come to life from Buckingham Palace and gone on a trip to see Houghton Hall Park.



The trail takes about forty-five minutes to complete but can be completed in more than one visit. It's completely free for families and groups to take part in and they win a free, digital fun pack at the end.

Not only is the trail an innovative and fun day out but you can also choose to donate to Help for Heroes to support our veterans and their families. Melanie Waters, chief executive of the charity said:

"We're thrilled to be the charity partner for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons Trail and really looking forward to taking part in this innovative, community-based activity, as part of our plans to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee this year."

The trail runs from April 30th to June 12th. To find out more about the trail, visit the website: www.jubileebeacontrail.com

Jubilee Arts & Crafts

When: Sunday 22nd May

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £12 per person

Come down to the Visitors Centre this half term and take part in our Jubilee art and craft sessions, make some bunting to display in the café, then create some items to take home including bookmarks, bracelets and jigsaws!



These are FREE* drop-in sessions and offered on a first come, first served basis, if we are full why not take part in the FREE Jubilee trail around the park first?

Parents must stay with the children during the session

*these sessions are free but a voluntary donation can be given on the day

Classics in the Park

When: Sunday 3rd July

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £5 to enter a vehicle

Our first Classics in the Park event will take place on Sunday 3rd July, set in our beautiful park it's a day not to be missed, especially if you love classic cars. We will have five different categories of vehicle on display, you will also have the chance to vote for your favourite vehicle.

Along with the cars we will have a selection of our popular craft and produce stalls. Swing Dance MK will be providing the entertainment from 12pm, they will be showing us their moves and also giving you a chance to join in! The Stick Man trail will be out in the park for the kids to burn off some energy.

If you would like to show your vehicle entries cost £5, this includes a souvenir of the day, there will also be trophies for the winners of each category and rosettes for the runners up. Bookings can be made on our website: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/classics-in-the-park>

If you are a group and would like to enter please email hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk, there is a limit of ten vehicles per group.

The closing date for entries is Friday 24th June.



Stickman Trail

When: Sunday 3rd July

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: Free!

To coincide with our Classics in the Park event our popular Stick Man trail will be up in the park on 3rd July. Come down and visit our fun-filled activity trail featuring popular picture book character Stick Man. The self-guided trail is aimed at encouraging children aged 3-7 to get outdoors and explore the natural world and find out how things grow. If you want to 'twig' how much fun trails can be, then visit us 10am to 3pm.



Pop-Up Tasty Creative Stalls



When: Every weekend in the Visitors Centre Foyer

Cost: £10 per day

We offer the foyer space in the Visitors Centre every weekend to local crafters as an opportunity to showcase their work with a pop-up stall, stalls cost £10 per day and can be booked on our website:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/pop-up-tasty-creative>

Buggy Exercise

When: Every Wednesday during term time

Time: 10am outside the Visitors Centre

Cost: £2

This is the perfect class if you have a baby, would like to meet other parents and get fit in the process! The park is a great sensory experience for your baby, just getting out in the fresh air and nature is proven to boost your mood and increase energy.

The class starts with a gentle jog/walk/stretch around the park followed by a circuit and sometimes boxing which is a great stress reliever!

To book on visit our website: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-exercise>



Parkrun & Junior Parkrun



When: Parkrun every Saturday and Junior Parkrun every Sunday

Time: 9am

Cost: Free!

A free, weekly, timed 5k/2k walk/jog/run at 9am every Saturday & Sunday. Open to all ages and abilities. Organised entirely by volunteers. Friendly and fun.

If you would like to take part but have not run before you will need to register at www.parkrun.org.uk

Monthly Photography Themes

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

May's theme is: 'The Meadow in Houghton Hall Park' we would love to see what you capture, it's looking very picturesque at the moment with all the cowslips and buttercups flowering! Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st May 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, in our monthly newsletter and our new calendar.

Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles Central Bedfordshire

May's Photography Theme

'The Meadow' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in May
- 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: hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 31st May
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED

April's theme was 'Spring Blossom' in Houghton Hall Park, thank you to Ruth Melnykowicz and Hayley Hope for sending in photos, they are blooming lovely!



By Ruth Melnykowicz



By Hayley Hope



Community Park Ranger Update

Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.

Well how quickly did April go by! April has been a busy month in the park from the Easter events, to U3A willow weaving to clearance work and compost clearance.

This month we have started doing some clearance work around the boarder by the cedar lawn. The shrubs have grown and gotten out of control and have started taking over the path. This work has been done with the help of my Thursday volunteer group and also a group from Weatherfield Academy. Next winter we will add in some more plants and hopefully some colour and the boarder will look fantastic this time next year!



This month I also ran a willow bird feeder session for a group from U3A. They came along had a look around site and made a bird feeder! They all looked fantastic and they did a great job!

You may remember that back in February we moved two apple trees onto the cedar lawn as they were running out of space next to the kitchen garden. The trees have taken really well and the blossom came out this month!

If you would like to get involved with volunteering please feel free to drop me an email: Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

I can't wait to see what May holds!

Stay safe

Eleanor



Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

When you hear the word pollinators, one of the first insects that comes to mind is the honey bee. These little insects are fascinating to watch, as it's easy to see them laden with yellow pollen as they move between flowers. Like butterflies and moths, honey bees have four stages of development, all of which happen within a single cell in the hive.



The queen will lay an egg in the cell. After three days the larva will emerge within the cell, it will be fed and cared for by worker bees and at a certain point within the next eight to ten days the cell will be sealed with wax and the larva will begin the next stage of development and pupate. Over the next week to ten days the young bee will form, eating its way out of its cell to emerge as a fully formed bee. The whole process taking up to twenty-four days from egg being laid, depending on whether it's a queen, drone or worker bee. Worker bees are all female and come from fertilised eggs and hatch in twenty-one days. The queen in sixteen and drones, which come from unfertilised eggs, are all male and emerge in twenty-four days from egg laying.

Apart from the queen, who can live for up to five years, honey bees only live for around six weeks in the summer. Worker bees that attend the queen over winter can live for six months.

Being the queen you would imagine she would be in charge of the hive, deciding what the bees do. But it is the female worker bees that make the day to day decisions in running the hive and what work needs to be done and which bee will do a particular job. But without a queen a hive cannot survive. She gives off a series of pheromones creating cohesion within the hive. As honey bees cannot survive on their own as individuals and everything they do is for the good of the hive, all the bees acting as one cohesive unit.

There is a pheromone to prevent female workers laying eggs, another tells all the bees in the hive she is alive and well. If for

My traditional WBC hive, it gets busy on warm days.

any reason she is missing, within thirty minutes the bees will know and prepare to create a new queen. Once a normal fertilised egg hatches, worker bees feed the larva with royal jelly which is high in nutrients and sugar. This causes the larva to grow extremely rapidly and within five days will weigh 2,500 times the weight of the egg it hatched from. As it grows worker bees extend the cell around the larva, finally sealing it closed with wax on the fifth day. Over the next eight days the larva will pupate and emerge as a queen bee. To ensure a successful outcome, bees will prepare several queens, so the first queen to emerge will insert her sting into the other queen cells, killing and preventing any rivals. Should she miss one and two queens emerge, there will be a fight to the death, the victor taking over the hive. The new queen will then leave the hive on her mating flight along with a few worker bees. Male drones also leave the hive whose sole purpose is to mate with the virgin queen.



Young worker bees drawing out wax comb.

Once they have performed their task the drones will die. The escorting worker bees will encourage the new queen to mate with as many as twenty drones. The queen keeps the sperm in a separate chamber, so can lay either unfertilised eggs to produce male drones or fertilised eggs to produce female workers.



A look inside the hive.

Back in the hive the mated queen will be fed by worker bees. The workers control her egg laying output by the amount of food they give her, the more food she gets the more eggs she will lay. At the height of the season the queen can lay upwards of two thousand eggs a day.

A population of a hive can grow to around 60,000 female workers during summer dropping to 15,000 over the winter. Worker bees do everything from

cleaning to collecting pollen and nectar. Newly emerged worker bees generally spend their first three weeks in the hive. Learning from older bees they keep the hive clean, polish cells in preparation either ready for the queen to lay an egg, or for storage of honey or pollen. Some will feed larvae or attend the queen. Once they are able to produce wax from a gland in their abdomen, they will build honeycomb and seal cells when larva start to pupate. The next three weeks will be spent on an endless cycle of collecting pollen, nectar and water, eventually dying from sheer exhaustion.

By contrast drones, which are all male, have a much easier time of it. Their only job is to mate with the queen. Typically, there will be some two hundred in a hive although this number will increase to the thousand mark if the bees decide to swarm. Swarming is the bee's way of dividing their numbers to create a new colony. The queen will leave with half the bees, leaving the remainder to create a new one to replace her.

Bee keeping is an increasingly popular hobby, so perhaps next month I will continue with the topic and explain more about hives and bee keeping and let you follow my journey as a new apiarist.



Inspecting a frame full of active workers.



Bees don't always grow comb in the right place!

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer



As you walk around the raised beds you will see the crops growing at quite a pace. It is a very busy time of year at the gardens, the warmer weather is encouraging established plants like rhubarb and the asparagus to grow, both of which we have started cropping. The carrots on bed 4 have put on good growth as have the onions and the strawberries on bed 6 have started to flower. Behind the scenes we have been pricking out hundreds of seedlings and moving them on to the next stage of their development and those that are ready are being planted into their designated places. We are still sowing for successional crops and quick germinating seeds like beans. The

potatoes on bed 8 have shot up and we have earthed them up to protect the growing potatoes from the light, which causes them to turn green.



Our popular produce sales have been going well. 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. We will be advertising 'produce sales days' in both the notice board on the boundary between the kitchen and formal garden and on the gates. Weather permitting the next will be on Thursday 19th May. Excitingly if all goes to plan we are hoping to be able to take card payments, as well as cash, from this date as well. The table is usually set up ready for 9.30am, giving us time to freshly

pick and prepare everything earlier in the morning.

As you may have seen our new produce hut is taking shape and it shouldn't be too much longer before we can start selling from it.

You may have noticed small ripples on the surface of water in the pond, apart from the ever present water boatman, these are caused by the hundreds of tadpoles coming up and gulping air. Watching them the other day I could see some of the larger ones were developing legs. The area at the front of the pond has been planted up with a variety of plants which will provide not only cover for the froglets, but resting places for insects including dragonflies. To the right-hand side of the pond towards the back, the planting area is a bog garden, supplied with waste water from our sink in the yard.



The crafters amongst the volunteers have been busy too preparing for the jubilee, so keep an eye out for our display on bed 7 which will be set up in the next few days.



You may also have seen we have started developing the children's area at the back of the kitchen garden. There are some colourful flower boards attached to the pond railings and a weaving tree fixed to the wall. Over the summer we will be building other items for various activities to take place.

Sue our new Community Gardener has now officially started and I'm sure she will be introducing herself to everyone in the June newsletter.

Take care

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens.

Friends of Houghton Hall Park

Shortly membership details of how to become a Friend of Houghton Hall Park and will be displayed in the noticeboard between the kitchen and formal gardens.

We will have the ability to take credit card payments and membership forms will be available at the kitchen garden produce table on Thursday 19th May.

Future news and updates about Friends of HHP will be in the Park newsletter in addition to the noticeboard.

Plant of the Month – Allium



Alliums are bulbous perennials, long-lived, they bloom for weeks on end, bridging the gap between spring and summer. Loved by bees, Alliums bear beautiful pompom flowers in shades of purple pink and white, and look fantastic when planted in large groups. Alliums make excellent cut flowers, both in fresh and dried flower arrangements.

Grow Alliums in moist but well-drained soil in full sun. It's a good idea to grow them among low-growing herbaceous plants, which hide their unsightly strappy foliage after flowering. Let Allium foliage die down naturally after blooming and consider leaving the flowerheads in place

as they look attractive in their own right, particularly in winter. Mulch annually with well-rotted compost or manure.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall 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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