



Houghton Hall Park

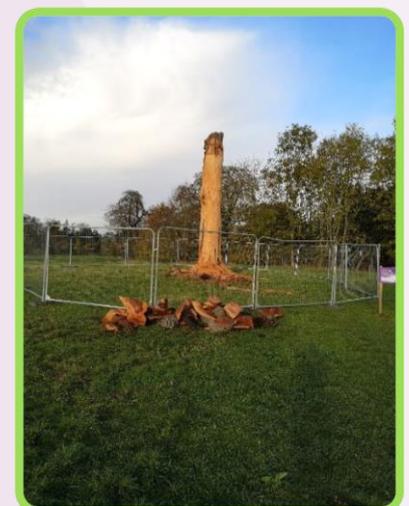
November 2019 Newsletter

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.

We are now in November and there is still lots to look forward to in the park over the winter months. The team are preparing lots of Christmas activities for you to enjoy, find out more below.

Totem Pole Update

You may remember over the summer we asked children to design a totem pole for the park, if you are a regular park user you will have noticed that work has begun on the tree trunk. Peter Leadbeater, the wood carver, came to Houghton Hall Park to judge all the entries with the park team and it was decided that we would incorporate elements of all the designs on to the tree. We don't want to give too much away but the final design is amazing and we can't wait for you to see it. Peter will be on site Tue-Sat for the next four weeks and he will hopefully have the totem pole finished for next months issue!



A great place to live and work.

What's On

Bedfordshire Day – Free Event



When: Thursday 28th November

Time: 2pm

To celebrate Bedfordshire Day on 28th November Houghton Regis Heritage Society will be showing three presentations in our Cedar Room, these are Village Memories with unique pictures from the Pat Lovering/HRHS archive, Heritage in the Park and Christmas in the park. This is a free event and no need to book.

Christmas Craft Fair

When: Sunday 1st December

Time: 10.30am to 3pm

Come and support our local handcrafters, a perfect opportunity to buy some unique gifts just in time for Christmas!



Children's Christmas Crafts

When: Sunday 8th December

Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm

Cost: £2.50 per child

Create some Christmas goodies at our drop-in craft session, limited spaces.

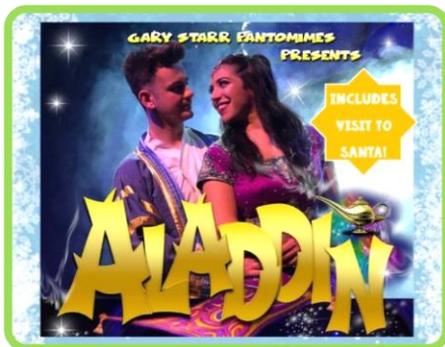
Christmas Trail – Free Event

When: Sunday 8th December

Time: 10.30am to 2.30pm

Come and see the Chief Elves at the Visitor Centre to collect your map and help find the presents that Santa has lost around the park! This activity is free and suitable for families of all ages. Last entry 1.30pm.





Aladdin – Family Pantomime

When: Sunday 15th December

Time: 11am

Cost: Tickets are £5 – all children must be accompanied by an adult who also needs to purchase a ticket, under 1's free.

Come and join us for the fantastic Christmas pantomime Aladdin, also included in your ticket price is a visit to see Santa and a small gift to take home!

Tickets are on sale now and are only available in the Visitors Centre Cafe, cash only. Buy your tickets early to avoid disappointment, tickets are non refundable.

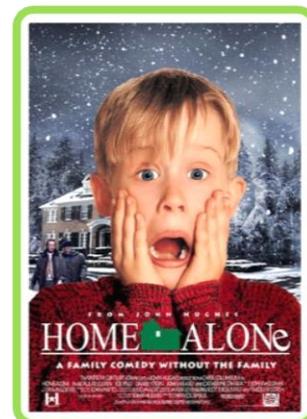
Home Alone – Family Film Screening

When: Monday 23rd December

Time: 11am

Cost: Tickets are £1.50 (includes popcorn), all children must be accompanied by an adult who also needs to purchase a ticket, under 1's free.

Share a classic Christmas film with your kids this winter at Houghton Hall Park.



Christmas Floral Workshops



When: Wreath making 5th, 6th & 7th December, table decoration 13th December

Time: 10am to 12pm or 1pm to 3pm

Cost: £10 (payable in cash on the day)

Get festive in Houghton Hall Park & learn how to create some wonderful creations for your home this Christmas! All sessions must be booked in advance email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to check availability and book on.

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 November 17th at 10am it will be coppicing in the woodland.



Monthly Photography Themes

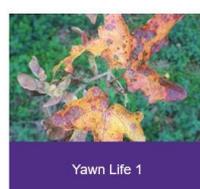
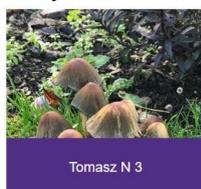
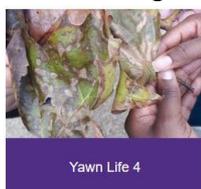
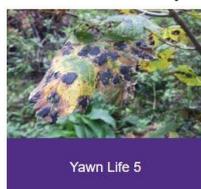
If you ever take images in the park, even if they're not for our monthly photography themes, we would still love to see them and feature them in our newsletter so please don't forget to show us your snaps from your visit!

We welcome photographers of all abilities and ages to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes; **November's Theme is: Celebrating the National Lottery's 25th Birthday.**

To celebrate the funding the park received, as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery, the theme this month celebrates the different heritage within the park the themes are 'Great Outdoors', 'Nature & Wildlife' and 'Treasured and Historic Places'. Each photo we receive will be added to our social media accounts with the hashtag [#Nationallottery25](https://www.instagram.com/hashtag/nationallottery25), let's show the lottery how the funding has made a difference to the park and our community!

Please send your submissions to hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 30th November 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. Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work: http://houghtonhallpark.org/assets/documents/Photography_Theme_TCs-1.pdf

Here are the entries from October's theme: Autumn in Houghton Hall Park, this season really show's off the park's stunning scenery



What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

Well winter is well and truly on its way, and I am still amazed at the breath-taking beauty of this wonderful park we share. The gentle frost and beguiling light make for some super images.

It is full on tidy up time in the garden but there are still some very persistent weed seeds around!

The grass has had its final cut of the year and we are busy reinstating edges to create sharp lines along the borders.

I would like to thank the dog walkers who are abiding by the 'dogs on leads' in this area. It has greatly reduced the amount of broken plants and dog mess that was becoming an inevitable find on a daily basis.

The leaves are coming down in numbers now so it will become a regular 'warm up' on the cold days. Last year we collected all the leaves to begin our own leafmould. One year on this is breaking down well and we should be able to use this precious resource to mulch and put organic matter back onto the beds



Using Leafmould in the Garden

After one year most leafmould can be crumbled by hand and while it won't be fully broken down, it's good enough for the kitchen garden. Use it as a mulch around existing crops and fruit bushes, dig it in to improve the condition of your soil, or just leave it on the surface over winter for the earthworm population to dig it in for you.

Leafmould that's a couple of years old will have a finer texture similar to the compost found in garden centres. By this stage it's unlikely to show any traces of the original leaves. This beautiful, friable material can be used as above or as compost for seed sowing. Alternatively mix it with equal parts garden compost, sharp sand and good-quality garden soil to make your own (free!) potting compost.

Kitchen Garden

You will have seen us busily tidying away canes, old crops and preparing for next season. The principle of the garden is to maintain a 'No dig' ethos which is championed by Charles Dowding. Last year we began to lay cardboard down on the beds which we then topped with manure and infilled the paths with bark chippings from the council waste. This has given us a really good base on which to evolve. The weeding has been relatively easy by having designated paths and by not digging the soil we are allowing the worms to do their job. The number of worms in the soil has improved in just one year!

As we remove the crops we will simply top up the soil with more organic matter and the cycle will begin again.



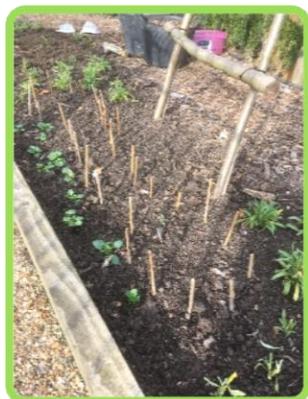
Preview of last year's ground preparation

The 'fairy tale bed' which is nearest the public path is being planned as we speak but already the first wave of planting is well under way and you will soon be able to enjoy an array of spring bulbs and plants. This

bed is being designed to encourage wildlife with a heavy emphasis towards polinator friendly plants. We look forward to sharing the developments with you.

The planting of spring cabbages for next year began this week and we have netted them against pigeon damage. The variety is 'April' and we hope they will produce a tasty crop.

At the beginning of the month we planted autumn onions, garlic and broad beans; all of which are taking well and begin to shoot. The squirrel has had a few but we will just plug the gaps with the spare ones!



Planting of tulips, wallflowers, crocus, daffodils



Preparing the ground for planting



Planting of spring cabbages



Amazing harvest of decorative gourds

The Thursday produce sales have been extremely well supported by yourselves but we have got to the end of them for a while as the weather is not always on our side at the moment. We will endeavor to make a better area with some protection next year. If you know anybody with a spare market barrow, just let me know!!

Our spooky decorative gourds found their way into local homes where we hope they were well used. This was a very lucrative packet of seeds as they were purchased from a budget supermarket for 39p and produced 276! It just goes to show you.



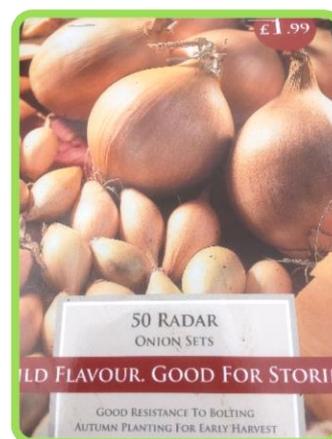
Leek harvest begins



Last of the produce sales for the year



Clearing the old bean crops



Autumn onion sets

Job of the month

Cleaning and clearing, planning and planting!!

Every cane that we are removing from the bed we are busy cleaning and bundling and storing out of the harsh weather. The broken and damaged canes are being cut up for bug houses or row markers so that we are recycling as much as we can.

It makes the job a lot nicer next year to work with tidy clean canes; trust me!

The vast volumes of green waste have meant that we needed to make some more compost bays which my volunteers have been busy doing this last few weeks. Just in time, finished Friday and filled by Tuesday!

These have been made from old pallets and salvaged bits of wood and they have turned out brilliantly.



It's all in the preparation!



Completed compost bay!

Plant of the month

Heather

A terrific plant that deserves a spot in any garden. They may be small, but Heather are inexpensive, evergreen plants that provide colour even in the coldest months. Originating from the Scottish Highlands they will transform any garden border, patio or rockery with their intense colours.

Planting Guide

Planting Time: Autumn-Early Spring 📅

Soil Type: Well drained, lime-free soil 🏠

Location: Full Sun/Partial Shade ☀️

Flowering Time: July-October & December-February 🌸



- *Space Heathers as far apart as their mature width and at least 60cm away from other shrubs (to ensure good air circulation).*
- *Dig a hole about twice as wide as the plug and half again as deep.*
- *Firm the soil around the plant and water-in.*
- *Water the plant once or twice a week when the soil is dry throughout the first season.*
- *Mulch after planting.*
- *Trim faded flower stems back to bases straight after flowering.*

Heather Folklore

White heather symbolises protection, good luck or wishes coming true. Scottish legend says white heather only grows where the fairies have been. Purple heather represents admiration and solitude. Queen Victoria declared they were a good luck charm similar to four leaf clover as in her reign they were scarce.

Community Links

Just before the clocks went back I was lucky enough to have our local scouts back for an amazing couple of hours. They really know how to get stuck in and achieved a huge amount. Well done all of you and I look forward to seeing you again next Spring!



My volunteers and supported internships have been preparing our remembrance display for some weeks now and it has finally been installed. Please pop down and see the finished result.





Well I really can't believe where the months are going, but try to get out and enjoy your own garden as it really does do you the world of good. Remember we are always here if you need any advice or encouragement.

Until next month...

Happy gardening!

Jenny

WINTER IS FINALLY UPON US



Winter is finally upon us, so are the early dark nights and with that comes the mists and fog, the icy frost on the ground overnight until the sunlight warms the ground and burns it away, fallen leaves are everywhere but the most beautiful thing is the different colours of the leaves as you drive along the country roads, the ground is full of fallen leaves and some of the trees are bare. By the roadside you might see a Kestrel hovering looking for a vole, a Red Kite floating around the thermals looking for a roadkill or a Buzzard circling as they do looking for a nice rabbit meal.

One of the other things that is great this time of year is the trees are so bare you can see the birds quite clearly, there should be a sudden influx of Winter birds around like Redwings and Fieldfares, they are beautiful birds, the Redwing is very much like a Thrush but with a red patch under its wing and a Fieldfare is also Thrush like but has a grey back, they mainly feed on berries and can also be seen in fruit trees.



So what should you feed your garden birds at Wintertime, I have always put bird feeders out with sunflower hearts, suet fat balls and this time of year I tend to put peanuts out too, this might encourage unusual visitors to your feeders like a Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, which is the biggest woodpecker we get in this country, they have amazing markings and the only difference is a little red dot on the tail of the Male.



I think we are really lucky in this area to have some great places to walk this time of year, like Ashridge, where if you're lucky you might see a herd of deer by the Monument, a Jay or even a Raven, they are being seen more often in this area, they are slightly bigger than a Carrion Crows and have larger longer beak, they have a slightly different call too, they sound like an old woman laughing.

Rushmere Country Park, is worth a visit too, they have an excellent Cafe with an outstanding view of Grey Herons and some great trees to climb for the younger members of your family, you can also take your dog along too. You can walk to the other side of the Park which is Stockgrove and walk around the lake which if you're lucky, you might see a Grey Heron or even a Mandarin Duck.

I was pleasantly surprised the other day, I saw a Black Squirrel in Houghton Regis on the road past the visitor centre, they are really unusual and seem to call out a lot more than the regular Grey ones and are a bit more aggressive too. The other thing I have noticed is there seems to be a lot of huge flocks of Long Tailed Tits about particularly on the suet ball feeders in my Garden, they are beautiful little birds and worth keeping an eye out for.



Winter is a busy time also for the Winter Waders, according to the Wildlife Trust, over half a million Lapwings, half a million Dunlin, 30,000 Knot and 300,000 Oystercatchers join our local birds for a jostling space on our mudflats. Winter is also a good time to search for Owls, most of the trees are without leaves so it makes it easier to see an Owls silhouette, Dawn and dusk are a great time to see them as there is a bit more light.

If you have seen a Bird in your garden, get in touch with us and we will identify it for you. If you get a picture of it send it to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and if it is good we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or 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

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 16:00pm



Houghton Hall Park

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
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LOTTERY FUNDED