

Houghton Hall Park

September 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 September, the children are back at school but there's still lots going on at the park for all ages, we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

What's On



Historic Houghton Hall Walk – Free!

When: 14th September

Time: 2pm

Where: Meet at the Visitors Centre

Led by the Houghton Regis Heritage Society, come along and enjoy a leisurely circular walk of approximately one hour whilst learning about the history of this 17th century park and finding out about the development and progress that has occurred throughout the park including the restored Kitchen Garden, Formal Gardens and the Visitor Centre. This walk is being held as part of Bedfordshire Walking Festival for more walks in the area visit www.bedswalkfest.co.uk



A great place to live and work.



Hullabaloo 'Look Up' Show – Free!

When: Sunday 22nd September

Time: 11am & 2pm

Where: Outside the Visitors Centre

Houghton Regis Hullabaloo is a free festival which celebrates art and performance in Houghton Regis, hosted by Full House Theatre. Look Up is a circus puppetry show for the whole family to enjoy! Why is everyone always looking down? Playful and fearless with a curiosity for birds and flying, Robyn reminds us all that we should dare to look up. The production includes highly skilled circus technique and puppetry, with a completely original soundtrack.

Buggy Exercise

When: Every Wednesday starting 11th September

Time: 10am to 11am

Where: Meet outside the Visitors Centre

Fun outside exercise session, starting with a warmup around the park then back to the Visitors Centre for a circuit and if we have time some boxing, all abilities welcome. A great way to meet other mums in the area, treat yourself in the café afterwards! £2 per session, payable on the day, register at www.bookwhen.com/clearfitness



Pilates & Yoga

When: Pilates Monday 12.30pm and Yoga 10am Tuesdays

Where: Visitors Centre – Lime Room

Classes will be held in the Lime room at the visitors centre. Must be booked in advance www.bookwhen.com/HappyHealthywithNatalie. Sessions welcome beginners and run during school term time, mats are provided. Please join us to keep fit!

For more information, please contact Natalie on 07725 115284 or email happyandhealthywithnatalie@outlook.com. Find more classes in Bedfordshire by visiting Natalie's website: www.happyandhealthywithNatalie.com.

Dog Festival Update

When: Sunday 13th October

Time: 11pm to 2pm

Where: Houghton Hall Park by the Visitors Centre

Things are coming together to make this event bigger and better than last year!

The Dog Show is being sponsored again by Pets at Home who will also be judging it and having a stall.

We have a number of charity and commercial stalls confirmed RSPCA, Accolade Hounds, Appledown Rescue, Pets as Therapy, Dog Krazy Gifts, Roo and Boo Ropes to name a few!

We are hoping to have a dog soft toy tombola, if you have any clean dog soft toys you would like to rehome please pop them into the Visitors Centre.

Rock Steady Flyball will be giving a demonstration and letting dogs have a go.

There will be a family (and dog) friendly trail where you and your pooch can earn a prize.

Local nature artist Steve Halton will also be showing both children and adults how to draw your dog.

There's still more being arranged, we'll be keeping you posted on the Houghton Hall Park Facebook page

If you would like to have a stall at the Dog Festival please contact us on hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Volunteer at the park this month

Take part in valuable conservation work at Houghton Hall Park with the Greensand Trust one Sunday a month! In August the volunteers removed around 2 cubic meters of ragwort and goldenrod from the meadows. There was more ragwort than expected, and the Canadian golden rod was unexpected! They also managed to survey 3 parts of the meadows, to begin their basic flora survey records. Hopefully next year they'll be able to survey 3 patches in each of the North, East and West areas to give us a better idea of the diversity and its changes.

This month, on Sunday 22nd, the task will be trimming the growth on the trees in front of the car park and staking and collaring the whips in the whip areas. Meet in the car park for 10 am.

Monthly Photography Themes

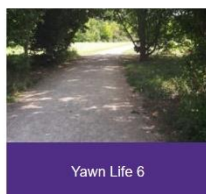
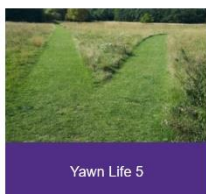
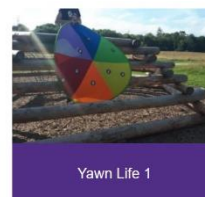
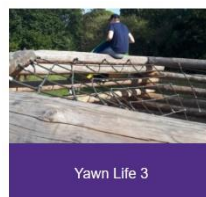
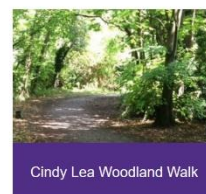
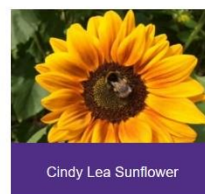
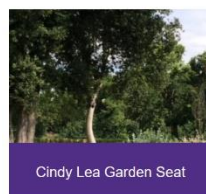
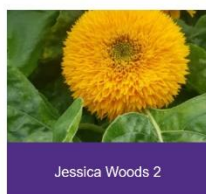
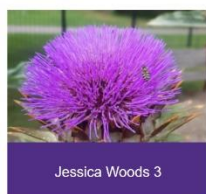
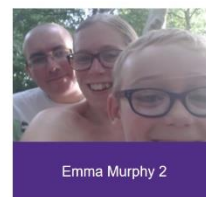
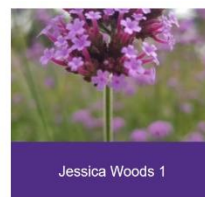
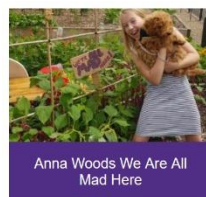
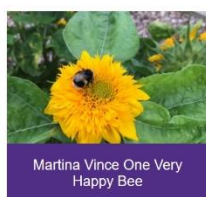
If you ever take images in the park, even if they're not for our monthly photography themes, we would still love to see them and feature them in our newsletter so please don't forget to show us your snaps from your visit!

We welcome photographers of all abilities and ages to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes; **September's Theme is: Natural Colours in Houghton Hall Park**, we can't wait to see what you capture!

Please send your submissions to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 30th September 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 August's theme: Summer Days in Houghton Hall Park, what a lovely, varied selection.



What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

There is still a little colour peeking through in some areas of the formal garden. I am especially pleased with the second flush of flowers that have appeared on the veronica, campanula and Alchemilla.

For those that walk through here regularly you will have noticed that we are defining the edges of the grass paths which really help to create a sharp demarcation of paths.



In the next few weeks we will begin to slightly clip and shape the yew and box hedging to thicken it up. Fingers crossed we will get a good downpour of rain to soak the roots.

The warm weather has meant that there are a lot of butterflies still around especially on the verberna bonariensis. Yet we are slowly turning the clock on the year and as I look at the glorious colours on the magnificent beech tree I can't help thinking; that's a lot of leaves to come down!



Kitchen Garden

What a bumper month for crops, this is really what all the hard work has been about. Our volunteers have been enjoying a myriad of produce this month, especially beans and courgettes!

So what have we been picking: tomatoes, chillies, peppers, aubergines, sweetcorn, onions, shallots, beetroot, celeriac, cabbages, lettuces, cucumber, mange tout, squashes and not forgetting all the herbs!



We have been having a few produce days in the garden and I would like to thank you for supporting it so wonderfully. The next one will be on September 19th (weather permitting)

You may have noticed that the kitchen garden benches have been restored to their former glory. Harry has been working tirelessly in the summer sun to rub down and stain these for us.

Of course, none of this would be possible without my great team of volunteers, which is growing month by month. Their help and dedication is invaluable to the park and every one that joins us has something different to add to the mix! I can assure you there is plenty to get involved with if you want to join our team!

Job of the month

The spring cabbages have now been sown and have had their first encounter with the cabbage white butterfly. I am hoping we will be able to salvage the poor little seedlings. Turn your back for a second!!

This month we will continue to harvest and slowly clear the beds as the crops finish. If the weather stays mild we may be able to continue harvesting beans for a few more weeks to come.



It will then be time to turn our attention to sowing green manure.

The best way is to **sow green manures**. Green manures are plants such ryegrass, clovers, field beans, phacelia, mustards and buckwheat sown fairly

thickly to produce a dense mat of green growth that is dug in (or cut down) before the plant flowers to increase soil fertility.

Simply by having the ground covered will prevent weed seed germination, if allowed to flower it also helps the wildlife by having a flush of flowers later in the year.

I have used them for several years and feel they a really important part of the gardening cycle. You will find a big array in the garden centres each providing a different quality for your soil.

Please come and find me in the garden if you would like any more information



Over-winter Green Manures

To overwinter sow field beans, winter tares or Hungarian grazing rye. For early and mid-season sowings; alfalfa, buckwheat, crimson clover or annual ryegrass are good options.

Usually when ready the green manure is cut and allowed to wilt for a few days before being dug into the soil. A pair of shears is useful for this. The plants quickly decay and release their nutrients as well as adding humus into the soil.

The following table gives an overview of green manures:

Plant	Fixes Nitrogen	Sowing	Overwinters
Alfalfa	YES	Apr – Jul	YES
Field Beans	YES	Sep – Nov	YES
Buckwheat	NO	Apr – Aug	NO

Crimson Clover	YES	Apr – Sep	NO
Other Clovers	YES	Apr – Aug	YES
Fenugreek	NO	Mar – Aug	NO
Lupins	YES	Mar – Jun	NO
Mustard ¹	NO	Mar – Sep	NO
Phacelia	NO	Mar – Sep	NO
Fodder Radish ¹	NO	Aug – Sep	NO
Rye, Grazing	NO	Aug – Sep	YES
Rye, Annual Grass ²	NO	Spring or Autumn	YES
Tares	YES	Mar – Sep	YES
Trefoil	YES	Mar – Aug	YES

Plant of the month

Dahlias

Dahlias were first discovered in Mexico in 1570 by Francisco Hernandez who spent seven years studying plants in the country.

The next time dahlias appear in history is 1789, when the director of the Botanical Garden at Mexico City sent plant parts to Antonio Jose Cavarilles, who worked at the Royal Gardens of Madrid in Spain. From these he grew 3 new plant forms. He named the genus after Andreas Dahl, a Swedish botanist.

Seed and plant parts from these dahlias were sent throughout Europe beginning in the early 1800s. As hybridization work continued, the first fully double forms began to make their appearance, as did many new colour combinations. In 1872 a crate of dahlia tubers was sent from Mexico to Holland, however upon arrival it was discovered that only **one** tuber had survived the long Atlantic crossing.

This lone tuber of a new variety (*D. juarezii*) produced a bright red bloom with petals that were rolled back and pointed. Interest in the dahlia by plant breeders was renewed at once and the successful combination of this new variety with earlier varieties served as the parent stock for the current lists of dahlia variations.

Modern-day dahlias

Through the 1800s and 1900s, thousands of new forms were developed, with 14,000 cultivars recognized by 1936, and in the past century nearly 50,000 named varieties have been listed. All of these dahlia forms were hybridized from at least two, and possibly all three, of the original Dahlia species from Mexico.

After 200 years of culture, selective breeding, and hybridizing, today's dahlia has one of the largest variations of forms, colours, and sizes of any flower grown. More Dahlia hybridizers are active now than at any other time in history, which means a constant addition of varieties each year. Today, this flower remains the National Flower of Mexico where its great beauty was first discovered by the mighty Aztec Indians so long ago.

You will never look at the dahlia in the same way again!

We are growing some in the kitchen garden and would be really happy to cut some for you to be able to enjoy at home. Please let us know and we will be only too happy to share them with you.

Community Links

On Thursday 29th August we organised 'Butterfly day' in the formal garden which was well attended by our local community. We had lots of games, quizzes and craft activities which so many of you participated in.

With the sun shining it obviously helped, but what struck us was what a wonderful community this is, so many of you chatting together and laughing, so long may it continue





A special thanks to our NCS students have helped throughout the summer at a variety of events. They were key to helping with butterfly day and you can see from the photos below their involvement. Carol from coffee and craft has as always been making, sewing and on hand to provide hours of behind the scenes work to enable this day to go ahead.



My volunteers, family, friends and co-workers worked tirelessly to help make, set up, run and clear away and without all of you playing a part this event would not have been possible. A 6.30am start doesn't phase them! If you are interested in helping to make this an annual event, please contact us to make this bigger and better for next year.



The start of this month marks my first year at Houghton hall Park and I can honestly say it has flown by. Thank you for taking such an interest in what we do, supporting all the events and making our garden a community one in every sense of the word.

Here's to the year ahead!

Happy gardening!

Jenny

SUMMER IS HERE AND SO ARE THE INSECTS



The one thing you may notice if you go to a river or a lake this time of the year is the abundance of Dragonflies and Damselflies that are flying around the plants by the water, you may occasionally see a fish leap out and grab one. There are loads of them, large Hawkers, large blue ones called

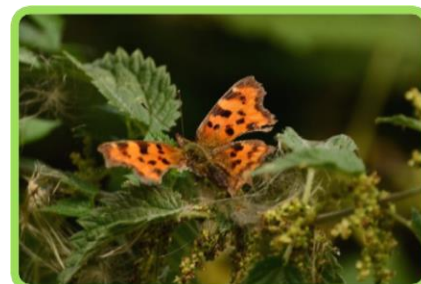
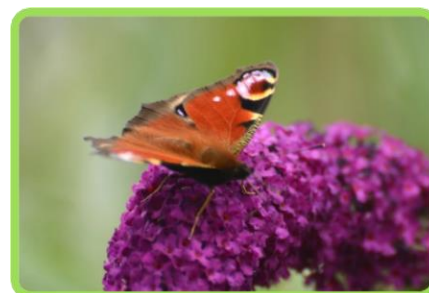
Emperor dragonflies and a common damselfly called a Banded Demoiselle, the males are bright blue with grey wings with a black band across the middle of its wings, hence its name and the female is green, but they are both quite stunning in their own way and worth looking out for.



The meadows are full of butterflies too, Commas, Peacocks, Red Admirals, Gatekeepers and Painted Ladies can all be seen if you keep your eyes out for them. The Comma is bright orange and has a ragged edges to its wings and can be seen on your buddleia bushes or on any hedge or even

nettles in your gardens. If you're lucky this time of year you might see a hedgehog in your garden but please be careful with what you put out for them. No mealworm because it affects their stomachs but cat food is ideal (but only meat food).

You can, if you're not sure what you get in your gardens, set up a camera to catch any night visitors, for example, my Mother has had Foxes and even a Roe Deer in her garden because we have found the footprints and faeces of each, you might even get a badger in your garden because they love slugs this time of year. If you do get any good pictures of these, send them in and share them.



We are quite lucky to have some nice places to walk in this area, the Sharpenhoe Clappers, which is the other side of Streatley is certainly worth a visit, it is said to be home to a Goshawk family which have been seen flying through the wooded part at the top of the main hill. Barton Springs is always a nice walk, it has a nice footpath and you often see Red Kites and Buzzards overhead because of the number of rabbits which can be seen in the valley and in the surrounding hills. You can even climb up the hillsides and see the wonderful view of Bedfordshire and some of Hertfordshire at the top, it really is quite stunning.

Going the other side of Dunstable, the Downs are always a great place to fly your kites, watch Buzzards floating in the thermals in the valley below and watch the Gliders take off too, which is worth a watch. The other side of Dagnall is one of my favourite places to walk, Ashridge Forest,

which is owned by the National Trust, you have 2 options, you can park in the car park near the monument and walk in the wooded area along the pathways or cross the road the other side of entrance and go and look for the Herd of Fallow Deer which frequent that area of the Forest near the House and quite close to Ashridge Golf Course too.

Your other option is to Ivinghoe Beacon, park your car and walk up to the top of the Hill and see the magnificent views across the whole valley, take a drink and some sandwiches and you can sit at the top and have a picnic, you might see Kestrels hovering against the wind as it if was not there looking for a nice tasty vole to eat. They are amazing how still than can stay even when it is a gusty wind.



If you have seen a Bird in your garden and your not sure what it is, get in touch with us and we will identify it for you. If you get a picture of it send it hhp@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

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm



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
Bedfordshire
Council**



LOTTERY FUNDED