



Houghton Hall Park

December 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 December, we've had a busy month so far with lots of festive activities, the volunteers have also been busy making all the beautiful decorations in the Visitors Centre, they look stunning. Have a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

The Totem Pole is Finished!



After four weeks hard work in the elements Peter Leadbeater has finished the totem pole. We hope you like the design, there have been lots of positive comments from our park users. The children who submitted designs were invited to come and meet Peter at the end of November to see the almost completed project and to ask him questions, they were thrilled when they could see their ideas interpreted on to the pole. Go and take a look when you are next in the park, see how many different things you can spot!



A great place to live and work.

Bedfordshire Day

The Bedfordshire flag was proudly flying over the park on the 28th November and the lovely customers in the café went mad for Bedfordshire Clangers, we ordered fifty and they were all sold out by 12.30pm, we are now looking at having them as a permanent fixture on the café menu! Over twenty people also attended the presentations on Houghton Regis from the Houghton Regis Heritage Society, a brilliant turnout for a midweek event.



Christmas Craft Fair

To start off the festive season we held a Christmas Craft Fair on Sunday 1st December in the Visitors Centre, we had some wonderful stalls selling many unique festive products and Dunstable Concert Ensemble added to the festive atmosphere with some fabulous Christmas tunes.



Christmas Floral Workshops

These events were very popular and became fully booked extremely quickly! The first session took place on Thursday 5th December, with Jenny our Community Gardener leading the sessions, and I'm sure you'll agree that the garlands created were absolutely wonderful!



What's On

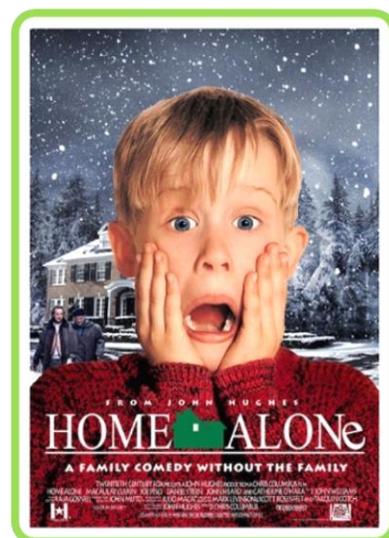
Home Alone – Family Film Screening

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.

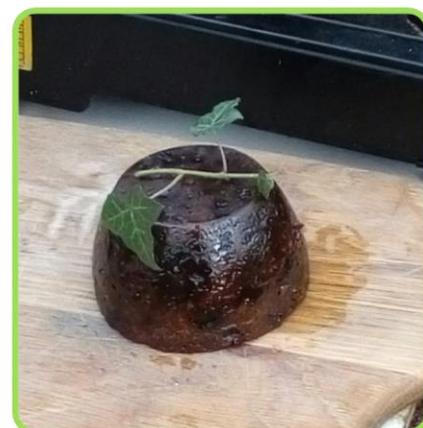
Share a classic Christmas film with your kids this winter at Houghton Hall Park. There are limited tickets still available for this event.



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 December 22nd we'll be doing more coppicing along the Eastern path, near the climbing stumps, and have our annual Xmas drinks and cake!



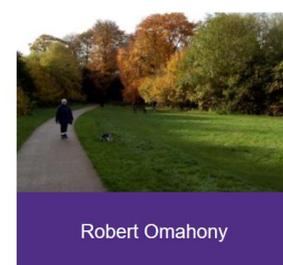
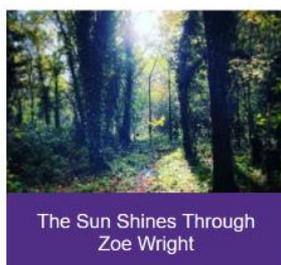
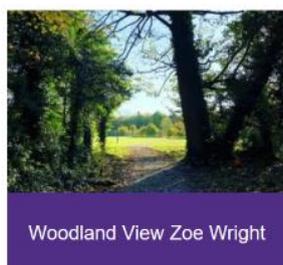
Monthly Photography Themes

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; **December's Theme is: Winter in Houghton Hall Park.**

Please send your submissions to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 31st December 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 November's theme: celebrating the National Lottery's 25th Birthday, this season really show's off the park's stunning scenery



What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

I can honestly say the ground is well and truly moist now. It feels like we have had more than our fair share of rain this past month. It has put pay to some of our gardening, but we are finding lots of other things to do. Leaf raking is still our biggest job this time of year and one that definitely warms you up!

You may have noticed that some of the herbaceous plants have been left and not cut back yet. This helps overwintering insects and provides protection to the crowns of the plants.

There will be little to do around this area for a while, but it won't be long before we are watching the new shoots coming through again.

Kitchen Garden

We are still tidying up and harvesting some winter vegetables but with this wet weather it hasn't been the easiest dodging between the rain showers!

We have put in some chard which are really quite hardy and should be able to overwinter themselves and then put on some growth in the early spring. The leaves are so colourful and look attractive in their own right.

With a delivery of manure due soon we will be topping up the growing areas and allowing the worms to naturally incorporate it ready for spring planting.

Volunteers keeping busy

My volunteers and I are currently turning our attention to the sowing plan and bed designs for next year. We have some very exciting ideas which we will be sharing with you shortly!



There are so many things for us all to do at the moment behind the scenes that you may not see us as much in the garden. We are busy making things for a craft stall, making a Christmas grotto, making decorations for the visitors centre and so much more!!

I am sure you will all agree that their involvement in all aspects of Houghton hall park bring you great pleasure when you visit. I am delighted to work alongside some very talented and absolutely wonderful local residents. Thank you on behalf of us all for all your time and enthusiasm!







Wishing you all a very peaceful Christmas and New Year

Looking forward to seeing you in the New Year

Happy planning!

Jenny

SOME NATURE MEMORIES OF 2019

December really is a very dull month for Wildlife and Nature. The dark nights, the chilly winds and nothing much really happen, so I have decided to share some of my nature highlights from this year. The best day for Birdwatching was definitely at Bempton Cliffs near Scarborough in Yorkshire.

Bempton Cliffs is a very nice reserve, it has several wooden platforms that you can stand on to see the cliffs below, which are the homes of an abundance of sea birds like Gannets, Guillemots, Puffins and Razorbills. The Guillemots stand on 4cm wide ledges high up on the cliff face, they have brown feathers which look like leather but they are fascinating birds. My favourite however is the Gannets, they zoom around the skies and change direction dramatically,



swoop, swirl and then land on the rocks or pathways so you can get a better look at them. They have yellow heads, beautiful blue eyes and very sharp greyish silver beaks, they have black tips to their wings and the same size as a Black Headed Gull.



One of the other birds you might see is a little black and white bird with a red/blue beak and lovely red eyes, which waddles along the cliff tops and is definitely worth going to see if your every in that area, it is, of course, a Puffin.

I have been to a lot of RSPB reserves in Norfolk this year, Titchwell, Frampton Cliffs and a trip to Suffolk to Minsmere, they are all

amazing places to visit and if your a member of the RSPB you get free parking and entry to all the reserves too. Titchwell was my favourite as I got to stand 12 feet away from a very strange looking bird, a Curlew, they have a really long beak which they use to get molluscs from deep in the sand on the beach.



One of my other favourite organisations to visit is the National Trust, we have some great places locally to go and see, Ashridge, Stowe, Wicken Fen and also Anglesey Abbey, which are beautiful houses and have some fantastic gardens where you can see all sorts of Wildlife, trees and plants.

If you have seen a Bird in your garden and you're 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 to 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 - 15:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 16:00pm



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



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LOTTERY FUNDED