



# Houghton Hall Park

## November 2018 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.

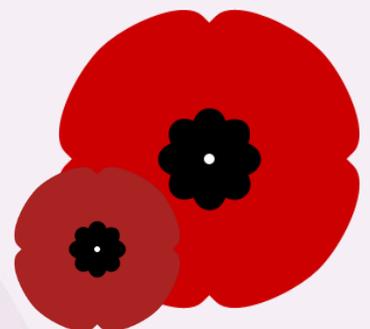
### World War One Tea & Cake

**When: Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November**

**Time: 12-2pm**

**Price: Free to attend**

Take a step back to the 1910's and join us for our World War One themed Tea & Cake event in remembrance of all those who lived through or passed away during WW1, join us to say thank you. This event is free to attend and will have WW1 themed tea & cake available (while stocks last) with all donations going to the Royal British Legion. There will be a display of local images & memorabilia from WW1 generously created by a local resident and the Houghton Regis Heritage Society, you will have the opportunity to crochet your very own poppy. And our most exciting news of all is if the weather is kind to us, there will be a real Glider plane that will sit on the grass next to the centre for visitors to sit in and experience an essence of a war pilot's life. We really hope to see you at this event to celebrate some amazing moments and interesting creations during World War One.



### 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 **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November 10am-3pm**, continue upon previous efforts to enhance the park's woodlands by carrying out this historic management technique, which improves woodland bio-diversity and woodland age structure. If you would like to come along, please email: [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) to let us know. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.

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

# What's the latest in the gardens?

## Formal Garden

The weather had been extremely kind to me for the month of October and I have been steadily working my way around the beds trying to restore order to the chaos! The extreme dry summer did nothing to help the dry neglected beds but after some great spells of rain, I can at least get my fork into the soil now. This is important as it means the compacted weedy soil has at least been turned over. I have begun the process of cutting back some of the herbaceous perennials, however, if they had still been standing upright on the plants, I would have left some of these for overwintering ladybirds and as food for the birds. There is always a balance to any garden as to how much you should tidy away this time of year. The grass has now had the final cut of the year and we are gradually beginning to create sharp edges to the grass paths which always helps to improve the overall look.



Edging grass borders

## Kitchen Garden

Well it was only a few weeks ago we had the last crop of runner beans – the late sowing definitely paid off! I have finally admitted defeat with the fact that the cold snap has seen the last few tender crops off. Courgettes, tomatoes, sweetcorn, and onions are all over for this year. However, the leeks, pumpkins, carrots, chard, spinach and kale are still making their way up to the café for tasty soups.

I have also been busy moving some crops around and we now have the makings of a 'Perennial bed'. This is a dedicated bed for edibles that are permanent or have a life cycle of a few years. This means that they won't be part of the crop rotation which happens annually on the other beds. It means that we can establish a healthy crop of rhubarb, asparagus, gooseberries and herbs which often improve their vigour as they age.

In addition, I have also moved the strawberry plants to one bed and set them in easy to access rows so that we will pick them with greater ease. Bet we will have a few eager volunteers that day!

Although you will see the beds being emptied of the summer crops, this is an important time of year to add organic matter to the soil in the form of manure or mushroom compost. This will improve the soil structure and will assist water and nutrients to be retained.

Back in September, I sowed some rocket, spinach, spring cabbages and winter lettuces which you will have seen me planting out this last week. These winter salads can withstand the cooler climate and provide some alternative produce in the next few weeks.



Broad bean 'Aquadulce'



Mizuna



Spring cabbages

I have also been busy sowing broad beans and one particular variety which is suitable for November sowing is 'Aquadulce'. This means we should get a crop a few weeks earlier than the February sown varieties.

## Job of the month



The leaves are coming down thick and fast now and are best collected off the lawn. They will stop the air flow and rain getting down to the roots and will also become the perfect habitat for pests and diseases. Don't despair though, collecting leaves together and storing them for a year or longer will create the most perfect 'leaf mould'. This is like gold dust of gardening!

If you don't have space for a purpose-built leaf enclosure, you can still collect them in a large sack (perforated with holes), turn your collection regularly and watch nature do the rest. If you can leave it for minimum of a year, you will see it begin to break down into a wonderfully crumbly texture. This can then be used back into your garden to organically improve your soil or

as a mulch to suppress weeds. Your pile will reduce in volume to about a quarter so be sure to collect plenty. I will keep you posted as to how ours is progressing over the next year.



### Plant of the month

For me, it has to be the beautiful colour of the Sedums, this late flowering plant provides bees with a late source of nectar when lots of the other flowering plants are finished. They are extremely drought tolerant and can survive long periods of drought. Come and look at ours in the formal garden when you are next passing.



### Vegetable of the month

Surely, we cannot let October pass without celebrating the pumpkin. This year we managed to grow 102!! They have been used to make pumpkin soup in the café, painted by local children at an event in the centre and sold to visitors. Next year I will be growing a greater range of pumpkins as there are some fabulous varieties available.

### New developments

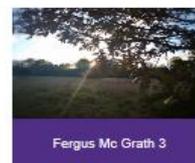
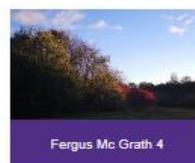
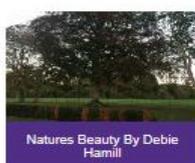
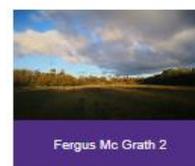
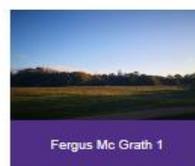
Opposite the kitchen garden there is a line of yews which have been crying out for some attention. With the help of Ben and Sandra we have been busy clearing the area of weeds and is ready for some spring bulbs to be added. I for one can't wait to see the splash of colour as you enter the park.

Happy Gardening, Jenny



## Monthly Photography Themes

We welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes, **November's theme is: Winter Sun in Houghton Hall Park.** We hope you have fun capturing some of the gorgeous winter sunrises and sunsets in Houghton Hall Park. We can't wait to see what you send us. Please send your submissions to [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk). The images must be taken between 1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018 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 and conditions before submitting your work: [www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography). Below are some entries from October's theme: Autumn Colours in Houghton Hall Park. We are delighted with the beautiful autumnal colours captured in Houghton Hall Park by our lovely visitors, please see their work below:



## Winter will soon be here *by Mark Hogan*

When the clocks go back in late October it is the first sign that the daylight hours will be shorter and that the cold chill of winter is soon approaching. Wildlife is still abundant if you look in the right places, like in the woods and forests where you may see mushrooms and toad stalls on the woodland floor, and lichen on the sides of trees on the bark can be quite amazing. There are lots of different types, one is a quite colourful one called a Fly Agaric, which is red or orange with little warts on top and has a white stem - this is the one they say Pixies live under. You might also see Chanterelles, which are white, orange or yellow and are usually funnel shaped. If you're interested in mushrooms, you could get a book from the library and do a little studying, so you know how to identify the different varieties, which could be fun. It's best to just look as some of them can be quite poisonous, so please be careful. Lichens can be seen on tree bark, some can be quite colourful like the orange fruited elm lichen and also tree lungwort which grows on the bark of the tree.



Photo credit: Ian Wilson



Photo credit: Sally Gibbons

The other beautiful thing about Autumn is the change of colour in the leaves on most of our trees, this is because of the lack of chlorophyll, which is what keeps the leaves green in the summer. Lots of leaves also fall off the trees and so do their fruits, like the acorn on the oak tree and the conkers/chestnuts on the horse chestnut tree. The leaf colours can be very different from russet brown to orange and even bright red depending on the tree and species, so keep your eye out, it can be quite beautiful.

Other animals hibernate like the hedgehog, who do occasionally change their home and can be seen occasionally in our gardens. You can buy hedgehog food at Pets at Home to put out for them, they do also

enjoy cat food but not the fish-based ones, just meat dishes. It is also a good idea to put a little bowl of water out for them to drink too. Other creatures like bats hibernate between November and March in buildings and outhouses.

The birds you see in your own gardens might change too, with birds like robins, which for some people epitomises winter. Chaffinch, goldfinch and even bullfinch might come into your garden because they love seeds like sunflower hearts and Niger too, but they are also keen on fruit and berries. Redwings and fieldfares might be seen in the local fields for the first time this year and some birds who normally like to eat worms and insects might go on the hunt in your garden for some fruit like sultanas and apples, especially the blackbird or starling. Something which you may see at dusk is called a MURMURATION of starlings where huge flocks fly around in the sky looking for a roost for the night, there can be up to 100 at a time - hopefully you will be lucky enough to witness this. It is an amazing sight because they fly close together but never touch or collide with each other.



Photo credit: Mark Hogan

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 too send it to [hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) and we may put it up in the Visitor Centre or in next month's newsletter.

Written by Mark Hogan

## Halloween activities

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the lovely families that attended our events during the half term. On Monday, our community gardener ran Ghoulish Games in the Gardens with a variety of Halloween style games which were spooktacularly fun! On Wednesday we had another popular Xplorer challenge using maps to find your way around the park to discover the halloween or nature themed plaques and on Sunday our pumpkin painting event took place using the wonderful produce grown by our community gardener in the kitchen garden this summer. Here are some images from the events:



## Keep in touch

### Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

### Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

### Twitter

@BedsCountryside

### Website

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

### Email

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

## Opening Times

### April to October

#### Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

#### Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm

### November to March

#### Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:00pm

#### Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 15:00pm



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



Central Bedfordshire Council



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