

# Houghton Hall Park

## January 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.

### What's your new year's resolution?!

Is it to start the new year fresh with some exercise, the opportunity to meet some new friends & to relieve that every day stress? There are plenty of opportunities to do some exercise at Houghton Hall Park, all classes are varied to suit everyone's ability, so why not try one out?

Class	Fitsteps NEW!	Pilates	Yoga	Buggy exercise	Parkrun	Walk, jog, run!
Day	Monday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Saturday – Adults Sunday – Junior	Anytime
Where	Visitor Centre	Visitor Centre	Visitor Centre	Meet outside Visitor Centre	Meet outside Visitor Centre	Houghton Hall Park
When	10-11	12:30-13:15	10-11	9:30-10:30	9-10	Whenever
Cost	£6	£4.50	£6	£2	Free	Free!
Contact	Hannahdelaney dance@gmail. com	happyandhealthywith natalie@outlook.com		Hayley.clear@ gmail.com	Adults: <a href="http://www.parkrun.org.uk/houghtonhall/course/">http://www.parkrun.org.uk/houghtonhall/course/</a> Junior: <a href="http://www.parkrun.org.uk/houghtonhall-juniors/">http://www.parkrun.org.uk/houghtonhall-juniors/</a>	N/A

A great place to live and work.

# Monthly Photography Themes

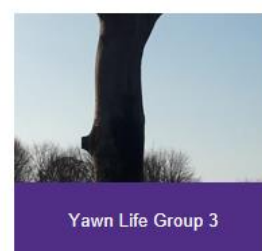
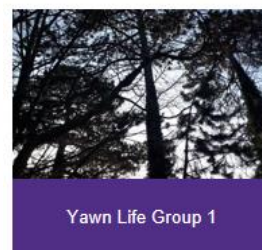
We welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes, **January's theme is: Wildlife in Houghton Hall Park**. We hope you have fun capturing some of the winter wildlife in the park, can you capture those fast, little black squirrels? Those tiny insects on trees? Or the beautiful Buzzard that visits the park? Don't forget **RSPB's Big Birdwatch is taking place 26-28<sup>th</sup> January**, go to their website to download their worksheet (<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/packrequest/>) and stake out in Houghton Hall Park to identify birds! We can't wait to see what you send us!

Please send your submissions to [hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk). The images must be taken between 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 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:

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

Below are some entries from December's theme: Winter Trees in Houghton Hall Park. We are so delighted to share the beautiful wintery tree images captured in Houghton Hall Park by our lovely visitors:





## Volunteer at the park this month

Maybe your new year's resolution is to do some more volunteering in your local community? Take part in valuable conservation work at Houghton Hall Park with the Greensand Trust one Sunday a month! This month, on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> January 10am-3pm**, continue upon previous efforts to enhance the park's woodlands by carrying out this historic management technique called hazel coppicing, the cut branches will be used as material for children to use in the fort building area. If you would like to come along, please email: [hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) to let us know. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there!

## What's the latest in the gardens?

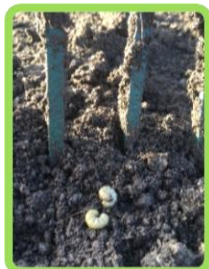


### Formal Garden

*I have been really trying to make headway in the garden these past few weeks, but the frost and the wet weather is not on our side. You can do a lot of damage to soil structure by compacting it in these conditions, so I have been working from the paths where I can. You may have noticed that we have been busy planting wall flowers and polyanthus by the Yew hedges and bulbs by the trees. Hopefully this will bring a burst of colour through in the spring.*

### Kitchen Garden

*Around the bases of the fruit trees we have been planting pansies, polyanthus and tulip bulbs again for some added colour in the spring. On dry days, the beds have been weeded and turned over to let the rain penetrate. It's amazing how dry the soil still is on these beds when you dig down a few inches. It also helps to expose hidden pests in your soil.*



*I would like to thank all of our park users for the positive comments we have received from our Christmas decorations we added to the gates and beds. These have been made by our local volunteers and students from All Saints Academy. We are just thrilled you enjoyed them!*



Garland on the gates of kitchen garden



Painted by students from All Saints

### Job of the month

*Keep on collecting those leaves there won't be many days left to do it now!*

*Plan your beds, decide what you would like to grow. Clean your tools off for winter, it doesn't pay to have them covered in mud until the spring.*

*I will be busy in the next few weeks writing up some information sheets for the plants in the formal garden, so you can have this knowledge to hand next year.*



### Plant of the month

*It must be the holly, what a wonderful addition to any garden with its glorious berries. Did you know they are dioecious meaning that in order to produce berries a male and female plant are required to produce seeds and in turn berries. These are highly poisonous to dogs and humans so be careful when you are about in the park. However, they are invaluable to the birds in this cold period. The Latin name for holly 'Ilex aquifolium' translates to 'with pointed leaves' yet not all of the varieties are prickly.*

### Vegetable of the month

*This would have been the time when I should be saying to you come and try some of the Brussel sprouts, as this truly is the season for them. However, as I was not on site until September we missed the sowing and planting time. Brussels are part of the brassica family so the same as Kale and cabbage. They require a really long sowing period and I will be looking to do this in March so next year will be a very different story!*

### New developments

*We held a series of floral workshops at Houghton Hall Park visitor centre this year. I am thrilled at how many of you attended and the quality of the displays you took home. We will be running events like this throughout the year so keep an eye out for what's happening next year.*



*What a creative bunch you are!!*

*Well, I may have only been here 12 weeks but thank you Houghton Regis for making me feel so welcome. I hope that you have all have enjoyed a peaceful festive break and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year.*

*Happy Gardening, Jenny*



## A Nature Review of 2018 by Mark Hogan



*What a fantastic year it has been for watching Wildlife and Nature, I have seen so many different birds and animals this year, like a Fox, Hares and even a couple of Muntjac. I saw Baby Herons grow from the size of a Starling and also Goslings grow from fluffy balls to full size Geese.*

*I have travelled a lot too, been to Dawlish in Devon twice and also been to Norfolk a couple of times. We are so fortunate to have so many wonderful places to go and see Birds and Wildlife in this area. Devon is such a beautiful place, I went to Dawlish which just the other side of Exeter. The River Exe is where the best reserve is to see birds, with Spoonbills, Herons, Egrets and an abundance of Gulls, Redshanks and Black Tailed Godwits.*

*I have even seen a lot of Wildlife in my Mums Garden in Houghton Regis, Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Blackcaps, Wrens, Goldfinches and loads of Long Tailed Tits which are pretty little birds and always seem to appear in flocks of 4 or 5. One of the biggest surprises though has been how many Red Kites we have over this area, I have seen them over my Mums garden and even 5 over Morrisons in Houghton Regis floating on the thermals above the Car Park and also above Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre.*



*I run a Birdwatch Group and we've travelled all over the place this year, from the RSPB Frampton reserve in Norfolk to Rutland Water in Leicestershire and visited a lot of local RSPB reserves too. One of the best experiences was taking a man named Clive, aged 69 to see his first ever Kingfisher at the RSPB reserves at Rye Meads near Hoddesdon. We set off for a walk around the reserve eventually getting to the Kingfisher Hide, we sat down and within 5 minutes the female Kingfisher flew down to a pole sticking out of the water*

*and then went into its nest and then flew out to a bush between us and its nest, a few minutes later the male did the same, so they were both sitting on the same bush. I also manage to get a picture of both of them together, a first for me.*

### What to look forward to in the next few months



*In January, you might see huge flocks of birds that can be seen on wetlands and estuaries like Oystercatchers, Black Tailed Godwits, Avocets and even Bewick Swans which have a yellow and black beak, different to the Swan, you might see on the ponds and lakes, they are orange. Redwings, Fieldfares and even Waxwings can be seen in huge flocks in fields and even on fruit trees if the weather gets too cold. You might also get unusual visitors to your Bird Table like a Black Cap, Wren or even a Green Woodpecker or*

*Greater Spotted Woodpecker, who love eating nuts.*

*You might notice a lot more bird song this time of the year too with Thrushes and Robins singing for territories and it is the only time of the year when Robins fight each other to do so. The rest of the year they seem to get on. Between now and April, birds will start building nests and some of our local birds like the Red Kite will start nesting at the end of March/beginning of April.*



*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 [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or in next month's newsletter.*

*Written & Photography by Mark Hogan*

## Keep in touch

### Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

### Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

### Twitter

@BedsCountryside

### Website

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

### Email

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



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