

Houghton Hall Park

May 2023 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.



May is proving to be an unpredictable month in terms of weather, one minute it is bright sunshine the next we have torrential rain showers! The rain has been very good for the plant life in the park, everything seems to have sprung up over the last couple of weeks, the buttercups and cowslips in the meadow look stunning. The changeable conditions have been a challenge in the kitchen garden, read gardener Sue's update for all that's been happening. If you haven't seen it do pop along and visit the kitchen garden display for King Charles III's coronation, as usual the volunteers have outdone themselves with a fantastic tribute.

Half term is coming up at the end of the month and we have organised some activities to keep the children entertained, the ever popular Stick Man trail is back and we also have a brand new event called 'Face your Fears Day', find out all about it in our 'What's On' pages. Entries are now also open for our second Classics in the Park show, if you know anyone with a classic vehicle spread the word!

Birds are the photography theme for May and Mark our volunteer has written about and taken some fantastic photographs in his nature notes this month. There isn't an update from Eleanor this month as she left us for pastures new, we wish her loads of luck for her new job working within the parks department at Coventry Council.



A great place to live and work.

What's On

Pop-Ups In the Foyer

We have some great stalls booked in the foyer for the remainder of May and there is still availability for June. We like to offer local crafters an opportunity to showcase their in the Visitors Centre foyer on a Saturday/Sunday, stalls cost £10 per day. If you are interested, you can find out more information, check availability and book on our website <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/pop-up>

Date	Pop-Up
20th May	Handmade by Rosie - Handmade Sewn Items
27th May	Murrays Makes - Embroidery Items

Stick Man Trail

When: Tuesday 30th May

Time: 11am to 2pm

Cost: Free!

We're branching out! Come down and visit our fun-filled activity trail featuring popular picture book character Stick Man. The self-guided trail is aimed at encouraging children aged 3-7 to get outdoors and explore the natural world and find out how things grow. If you want to 'twig' how much fun the trails can be, then visit us 11am to 2pm.



There will be a limited amount of free Stick Man Badges and Certificates in the Visitors Centre foyer, please come and find us once you have completed the trail. There will also be Stick Man Keyrings and soft toys for sale.

Please walk, scoot, or cycle to the park if you can, our parking is limited, overflow parking is available at Moore Crescent LU5 5GZ (five min walk to the park) just drive up to the barrier and it will open.

Face your Fears Day

When: Wednesday 31st May

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: From £3 per activity

Are you ready to face your fears this half term? On Wednesday 31st May we will have some challenges that are sure to send shivers down your spine!

Will you take on the activity wall? Standing at 7.3m high, the vibrant Activity Climbing Wall features one face where the holds light up and three exciting challenges, including the awesome and a

Can you face your fear of the dark and confined spaces on our second challenge?

With a series of realistic tunnels over 30m long, and exciting sumps and chambers, the mobile

If the activity wall and caving are too much of a challenge (or you are too small) there will be a mini obstacle course you can take part in for **FREE** which will be loads of fun and include items such as foam soft play blocks, balloons, sand and more!

Our final challenge of the day is to overcome your fear of animals which people are typically scared of, Teaching Talons will be on site with lots of animals to help you face your fear and to help you learn about and understand these animals more. Animals may include birds, rats, snakes and creepy crawlies!

Tickets are available to purchase on our website and will then be exchanged for tokens on the day. There will only be limited amount of tokens to purchase on the day so we recommend booking in advance, tickets can be purchased [HERE](#).

We are also offering a select number of stalls at this event, costing £15, you can find out more information and book [HERE](#)



The poster is for a 'Family Event' titled 'Face your Fears Day' on Wednesday 31st May from 10am to 3pm. It features the 'great lifestyles' logo with 'Central Bedfordshire' above it. The event is described as 'Are you ready to face your fears this half term?'. A list of activities includes: 'Take on the Activity Wall', 'Crawl through the caves', 'Meet and learn about animals we are typically scared of', and a 'FREE mini obstacle course'. It states 'Prices start at £3 per activity, prebookable on our website.' and provides the website 'www.houghtonhallpark.org'. A QR code is in the bottom right. The bottom of the poster has logos for 'Find out more online at', 'www.houghtonhallpark.org', 'Teaching Talons', and 'LOTTERY FUNDED'.

Family Event

Face your Fears Day

Wednesday 31st May 10am to 3pm

Are you ready to face your fears this half term?

- Take on the Activity Wall
- Crawl through the caves
- Meet and learn about animals we are typically scared of
- FREE mini obstacle course

Prices start at £3 per activity, prebookable on our website.

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

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Mindful Fest



When: Wednesday 31st May

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: From £3 per activity

Our very first Mindful Fest is taking place on Sunday 11th June, the day will be all about nurturing the mind and body, there will be taster classes in the Feldenkrais Method, children's yoga, adult meditation along with a sensory walk to the gardens, in addition there will be kite craft workshops throughout the day, a 'mindful' market and music brought to us by Pantasy Steel Band who will also let you have a go, last but not least the kitchen gardens will be open and the Friends of Houghton Hall Park will be on hand to share the benefits of gardening and to answer questions you may have.

If you are an instructor and would like to hold in an outside class, please contact us at:- hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

We would love our Mindful market to have stalls that will enrich your life, crafts and hobbies, health and beauty and great food, stalls will cost £15 and can be booked [HERE](#)

Classics in the Park

When: Sunday 9th July

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £5 to enter a vehicle, FREE to attend

It won't be long until our second Classics in the Park event, show off your classic vehicle in the beautiful surroundings of our park, there will be entertainment from Swing Dance MK and Jazz the 2 of Us along with our ever popular Stick Man trail and a great selection of stalls, we hope to see you there!

Entries are now open, to book you classic into the show visit our [WEBSITE](#)



Monthly Photography Themes



Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

May's Photography Theme

'Birds' in Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in May
- Some images will be shown on our website, social media platforms and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at: hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 31st May
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

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We welcome photographers of all abilities to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly theme.

May's theme is: 'Birds at Houghton Hall Park', we can't wait to see what you capture for this one, please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st May 2023 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

Last month's theme was 'Blossom' thank you for the super photos of blossom in the park sent in by the Rita Egan and Carol Butler, they really show the variety of blossom in the park.



Rita Egan 5



Rita Egan 2



Rita Egan 3



Icy White Carol Butler



Rita Egan 4



Pretty in Pink Carol Butler



Rita Egan 1

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

I take a lot of photos of wildlife in my garden, often waiting a long time, staying perfectly still. This month I've included some recent pictures, taken through the patio window of early morning visitors.

It's been another busy month for the birds that visit my garden. Apart from the great tits that is. Having started to settle in their nest in the apple tree, as I suspected, they had to abandon it. The number of other birds flying in and out of the tree, along with a visit of a squirrel, proved too much for them. They did try their best, but several times, I watched them, wings outstretched, trying to face off birds venturing too

close. For a couple of days they moved back to a nest they had started, but abandoned in favour of the tree. For some reason they weren't happy here either and moved on. The magpies, crows and blackbirds however, seem to have fared much better.

When I did the RSPB bird count back in February, I only recorded two starlings visiting the garden, but I'm glad this number has risen tenfold. Sparrows took the top spot for the twentieth year in a row, in the results of the Big Garden bird watch.

Quite a record considering we've lost around ten million pairs since the 1960's. Blue tits came in second their numbers remaining steady. Starling numbers are still in decline but managed to take third spot. Long tailed tits have made a remarkable recovery moving up from fifteenth to tenth place in a year.



A Magpie looking for the mealworms I put out daily.



Starling numbers visiting my garden are increasing.



This female squirrel is a regular visitor and becoming quite tame.



The female blackbird arrives as soon as her mate leaves.



The female blackbird arrives as soon as her mate leaves.

My bees too have been extremely busy, making the most of warm days. In a week they filled most of the frames in the brood chamber. This is the section where the queen lays her eggs. I have added another two sections in the last three weeks. These are known as supers, each containing eleven frames and is where bees will store honey. However, it's not all been plain sailing. I had my first swarm with some of the bees taking up temporary residence in a neighbour's tree. I was lucky they were in lower branches and could reach them with a step ladder. Despite them congregating in two large clumps, I managed to knock most of them

into a box, but they were determined to go and soon escaped again. The sad thing is that they are unlikely to survive for long unless another beekeeper finds them. Swarming is a natural process and the way bees expand and grow colonies. It usually occurs during May, June and sometimes into July. There is an old country saying, 'A swarm in May is worth a load of hay. One in June a silver spoon. But a swarm in July let them fly. The reasoning behind this folklore is, if you can catch a swarm in May or June there is still time for them to produce plenty of honey. But it's unlikely they will produce enough excess honey after this for the beekeeper to take. The main thing is, although I've lost a few thousand bees the majority have remained in the hive. As they seem to be working hard, it's a sign they are happy and likely the queen is still with them.

Until next time,

Mark

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Community Gardener



It's been a busy and eventful few weeks in the gardens.

The ever-changing weather has presented a bit of a challenge when planting out in the Kitchen Garden. With a few nights of frosts and days that seemed to have every season we have been cautious in when we have planted. Even now as I sit and write this update the weather outside is torrential rain, hailstones with thunder and lightning, will summer ever begin??!!

The beds in the Kitchen garden are now planted for the first crop of the year, a combination of

direct sow and young plants, hopefully they won't get washed away with all this rain!

The formal garden is growing well and the herbaceous perennials that have hidden away for the winter are now pushing their way through the soil and growing tall with the promise of flower and colour ahead.

Outside the Kitchen Garden we have been busy planting up box cones and lavender to replace the apple trees that were moved earlier in the year to the new Orchard.

Thanks to the staff from Whitbread who joined us for a fantastic day of volunteering, helping to achieve so much in one day!!

It was great to have so many extra pair of hands and hopefully they had a great day helping us out in the sun!



Thanks to all the Garden volunteers for also helping on this day with a variety of tasks and the provision of a much-needed cup of tea!

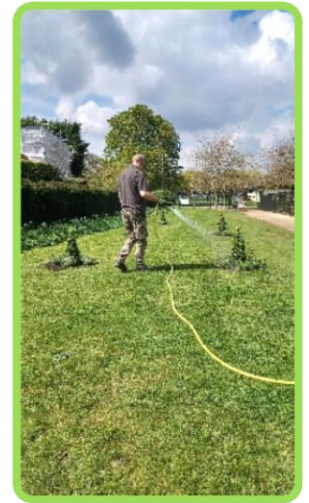
Huge Congratulations to our Activity Officer Hayley for completing the London Marathon! Such a brilliant achievement!

Finally, this month we bid a fond farewell to our Park Ranger Eleanor who has moved on to pastures new. Eleanor has been a great

help in the gardens and in the summer Eleanor and her team of volunteers have been working with us each Thursday to help with the increased seasonal workload. We will defiantly all miss Eleanor and her brilliance at Willow weaving!

So that's it for this month, I hope when we catch up next time it will be glorious sunshine not torrential storms!

Until then, Happy Gardening!





Become a volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of giving something back to your local community? 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 Volunteers of Houghton Hall Park, please email hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Mon – Sun 9am to 4pm



Central Bedfordshire Council



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