

Houghton Hall Park

June 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.

Houghton Hall Park scoops another award!



The Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre has won a regional award at the 2018 Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Central Building Excellence Awards in the 'Best Small Commercial Project' category, held on Friday 25 May.

The Local Authority Building Control (LABC) represents all local authority building control teams in England and Wales, split into 12 regions, each of which holds their own awards. Central Bedfordshire Council is part of an LABC network of 3,000 professional surveyors who provide impartial advice

and services on a 'not-for-profit' basis to home and property owners, architects, plan drawers, developers, building contractors and other professionals to ensure buildings are safe, healthy and efficient to meet the standards set by the building regulations.

The awards showcase innovative and creative build solutions and reward construction and building control excellence. Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre beat other shortlisted projects from across

A great place to live and work.

Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire & Bedfordshire. All winners at the regional awards automatically go forward to the national LABC finals in November.

The Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre was designed by Nicolas Tye Architects, who are based in Maulden in Central Bedfordshire. It was constructed by Modplan Building and Refurbishment Contractors Ltd, who are based in Arlesey in Central Bedfordshire.

Councillor Nigel Young, Central Bedfordshire Council Executive Member for Business and Regeneration, said: "We are delighted that Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre has been recognised at the LABC Awards. The building is an outstanding initiative which is providing the community with open spaces, new facilities and visitor attractions that they can enjoy and be proud of, while regenerating an important piece of Houghton Regis history, heritage and culture. Both the architect and construction company we used for this exceptional building are locally-based, and it has been constructed with high quality materials so that it will have low maintenance costs throughout its lifespan."

Our first Open Day was a success!

Held on Sunday 20th May, the event celebrated the Renaissance & Renewal Project funded by the Heritage Lottery & Big Lottery Fund that has enabled Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council to restore the Formal & Kitchen Gardens, restore vitality in the park and build a new Visitor Centre and Café for the local community which opened in October 2017. Our programme of *FREE* activities for all the family to enjoy went down a treat and it was lovely to see so many enjoying the glorious sunshine, live music, BBQ, fun activities on the day as well as exploring all areas of the park, thank you to all those who attended, we hope you had fun!



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, **June's theme is: Birds within Houghton Hall Park.** Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st and 30th June 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.

Below are some entries sent in for May's theme: Your pets within Houghton Hall Park, thank you all for your wonderful entries, we thoroughly enjoyed seeing all your furry friends enjoying their time in the park! It must have been tricky to capture these so well done for all your time and effort in joining last month's photography theme. Check out the great shots below:



Bruno & Regan by Barbara Withey



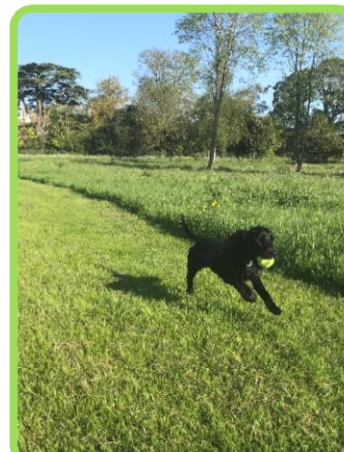
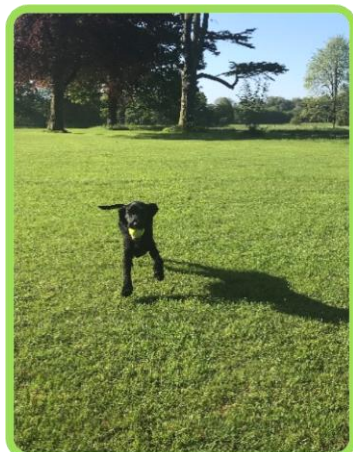
By Genny Simmons Chew



Ralph by Danielle King



Spoony the Labradoodle by Gabby Stares



Puppy enjoying the park by Lucy Lawrence



Norman & Annie in the bluebells and the buttercups, by owner Christina Pavely



Above 3 images captured by Mike Harrison

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 17th June 10am-3pm**, the activity will be Comfrey & Hogweed control. Same as last month it will be continuing to cut and clear these vigorous species in the park to allow for other wildflower species to grow. There is a lot of ground to cover in the meadows so if you would like to join this task and be a helping hand, it would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to come along, please email: hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know. The meeting spot will be the Visitor Centre car park on Park Road North. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.

What has the “Beast from the East” done to us?



The coming of Spring usually means the wonderful sight of baby birds almost everywhere you look in your gardens - open mouthed, flapping wings, trying to encourage their parents to feed them. The other thing that reminds me of Spring is seeing Swifts zooming around the sky around my house, unfortunately I have not seen many this year and I'm not sure why. So, I have investigated and found that the so-called “Beast from the East” has had some effect on their late arrival as well as a couple of massive dust storms in the Sahara Desert that held them up from returning to their nesting sites in the UK.

It is not only the Swifts that have been affected by all these adverse weather conditions - Swallows, House Martins and even Birds of Prey like Ospreys have been held up from returning to their nesting sites. The Osprey's usually nest in the highlands of Scotland and have also been seen recently at a place called Rutland Water in Leicestershire.



Watching Spring Watch on TV the other night, they had a deep discussion about what seems to be going on and they said that everything seemed to be about six weeks behind it's normal schedule and that for some birds like the Barn Owl, it was too late for them to produce any young this year.



If you're like me and you feed the birds every day, then you will also notice that there are a lot of Juvenile Starlings about, they are grey in colour, very fluffy and make an awful lot of noise! Particularly when they are trying to get their parents attention for food. Blue Tits, Great Tits and Robins also have young this time of the year too. Young Robins do not have a very prominent red breast when they are younger, so you may confuse them with a Warbler.

The other thing I found interesting was how many birds are killed by cats this time of year - around 200,000 mainly because the young chicks have never seen a cat and they are not aware of the danger.

If you have a nice garden and you want to scare cats away to protect the young birds then here is a cheap solution to that problem, throw lemon or orange peel over your garden! Most cats don't like the strong smell of citrus fruits so much, that they will keep well away from an area if they pick up this smell.

The thing I find truly amazing, is the growth rate of birds from them nesting to fledging. As an example, a Grey Heron chick when born is the size of a Starling but in only 8 weeks it grows into an almost fully-grown Heron which stands about 3ft high, they do tend to have a pink like crest on their heads too which makes them look very cool.

If you go to a local reservoir or lake you might also see swallows and house martins flying around vigorously trying to catch midges and insects. My favourite bird for doing this sort of thing is the Common Tern which are so acrobatic and agile in the air. You'll need some luck if you try to take a picture of one, they don't stop moving!

The other thing that you can do to encourage wildlife and birds into your gardens this time of year is to go and buy some plants from your local garden centre. Plants like Lavender will really encourage more bees into your garden and help pollenate all of your plants too.

If you see a bird or animal and you're not sure what it is, then please take a picture of it and send it to us at the Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre by emailing hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and we will try and identify it for you. We may even put it up in the Visitor Centre or in next month's newsletter.

Written by Mark Hogan (photography sourced online)

Keep in touch

Facebook

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Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

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



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LOTTERY FUNDED