

Houghton Hall Park

March 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.

You may have seen that in February we had a big volunteer day to create a new apple orchard. This involved regular volunteers from all over the site, community volunteers who just came along for the day, staff members from the café, as well as staff from within the council and also a group of volunteers from Silsoe Horticultural Training Centre.

It was a fantastic turn out and we managed to get a lot of the jobs needed done. You may have noticed that the apple trees from outside the kitchen garden have been moved. These are now in their new home next to the cedar tree as they were sustaining a lot of damage

and running out of space where they were. We hope you'll agree that they look much happier now. We also managed to clear around the border of the new Orchard allowing the overgrown path to be revealed making it a lot easier to walk that way now!

A really big thank you once again to everyone who came along to help, it really makes a massive difference to the park

when the community gets behind us.



A great place to live and work.

What's On

Spring Workshops

Spring Table Centre

When: Saturday 25th March

Time: 9am to 11.30am at the Visitors Centre

Cost: £35

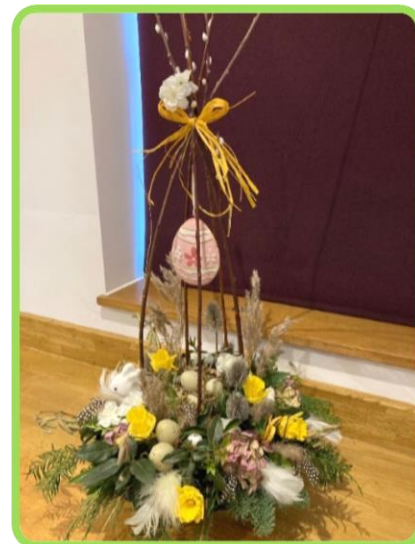
Looking for something to adorn your table this spring? This is the class is for you!

Learn different skills to create a fresh centre piece filled with fresh natural materials. Using locally sourced twigs and moss this design can be as abstract and flamboyant as you dare.

A full step-by-step tutorial to create a spring oasis in your home!

To reserve your space go to our website:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/spring-table-centre-workshop>



Easter Wreath Make at Home Kit

Collection: Sunday 2nd & Monday 3rd April 11am to 1pm

Cost: £17 to £20

Spring is in the air!

Are you a creative bunny and fancy trying your hand at an Easter wreath?

Included are all the decorations, eggs feathers and ribbons to make your very own display. We are offering three colour choices Pink (as illustrated) blue and yellow and two different size wreath bases . Rabbits may vary to compliment the designs.

Foliage will not be provided in your packs as we felt half the fun would be to forage twigs and foliage from your own garden or local greenspace. You may have some flowering viburnum or beautiful forsythia that needs a little trim!

We only have a limited number available so book your pack today!

To reserve your kit go to our website:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/easter-wreath-make-at-home-kit>

Birds of Prey Day



When: Sunday 26th March

Time: 10.30am to 3pm

Cost: Free!

On Sunday 26th March we will be learning all about Birds of Prey, the English School of Falconry will be joining us with a selection of birds which will be on display throughout the day for you to view, take photos and ask the falconer any questions, there will also be a twenty-minute flying display at 1pm with full commentary!

There will be a free birds of prey trail to take part in and

you can become a detective and find out what owls eat by dissecting one of their pellets!
(Chargeable activity)

Easter Trail & Stalls



When: Sunday 2nd & Monday 3rd April

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £4

Join us for an eggciting Easter Egg hunt this April, the Easter Bunny has gone on a trip to find out about Easter traditions around the world, he has sent a postcard from each country and hidden it in an egg, using your map find each egg to see which countries he has been to and what he has discovered, solve the clues and come back to the Visitors Centre to collect some treats from our Easter bunnies!

Your prize will include something to grow, an Easter activity sheet and a yummy sweet treat. Tickets cost £4

each, you can also take part in the trail for FREE but this will not include the prize. Please bring a pen, something to lean on and a bag to take home your prize.

Refunds will only be given if we cancel the event.

We will also have a selection of craft stalls at the event on Sunday 2nd April, there will be lots of Easter treats on offer, to book trail tickets or a stall for the event click the link below.

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/easter-egg-trail>

Xplorer

When: Thursday 6th April

Time: 10am to 12pm

Cost: Free!

Enjoy a FREE orienteering outdoor adventure at our upcoming Easter Xplorer event - the perfect activity for primary and pre-school children.

Xplorer is a fun FREE family friendly navigation challenge that gives children a sense of adventure as they explore the park to find the markers. It involves a healthy mix of physical activity and decision making that the whole family can enjoy together. Using a simple map, the aim is to find a number of markers that are located around the park. At each marker children need to identify what is pictured and enjoy learning a fun fact to tell their friends. Come back to the Visitors Centre to collect your certificate and sticker!



Xplorer will be running from 10am-12pm, last entry is 11.30pm.

Pick up your map from the Visitors Centre foyer.



WEEKEND POP-UP CRAFT/PRODUCE STALLS IN THE FOYER

18th March

Karen Sharratt - Jewellery & money boxes

19th March

Maxine Baker - Cards, notecards & crafts

25th March

Alisa Linger - Personalised items

Stalls cost £10 per day, if you are interested in having a stall please visit www.houghtonhallpark.org/events

Warm Space

When: Every Tuesday

Time: 9am to 4pm

Cost: Free!

The Lime Room at Houghton Hall Park Visitors Centre will be available each Tuesday 9am-4pm through the winter months as part of the network of Warm Spaces across Central Bedfordshire. Everyone is welcome. No need to book. Free Wi-fi, three hours free parking, and toilets are available (including accessible toilet and baby change) - and a selection of hot beverages will be available to anyone using the warm space with huge thanks to Really Awesome Coffee.

For more information on Warm Spaces and other locations near to you, please follow the link below.

<https://bit.ly/3XwGCNc>



Buggy Exercise



When: Every Wednesday during term time

Time: 10am outside the Visitors Centre

Cost: £2

This is the perfect class if you have a baby, would like to meet other parents and get fit in the process! The park is a great sensory experience for your baby, just getting out in the fresh air and nature is proven to boost your mood and increase energy.

The class starts with a gentle jog/walk/stretch around the park followed by a circuit and sometimes boxing which is a great stress reliever!

To book on visit our website: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-exercise>

Monthly Photography Themes

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

March's Photography Theme

'Spring' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

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

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED

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

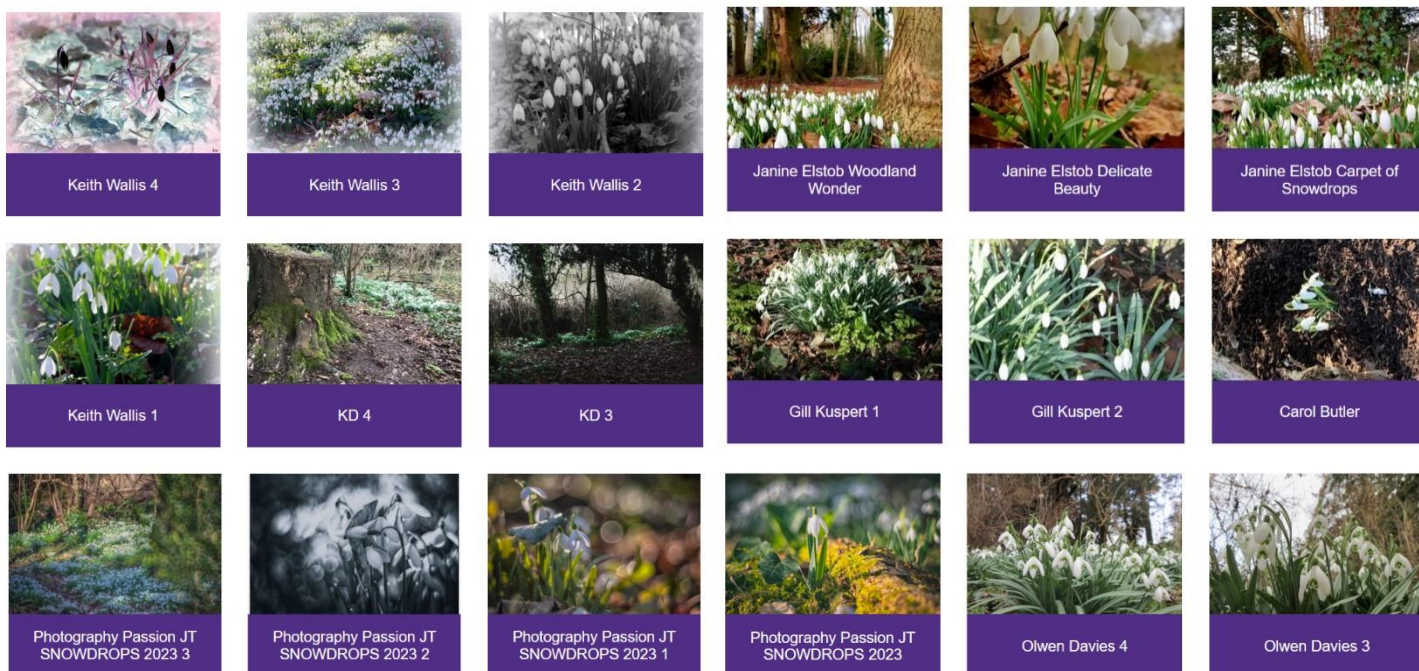
March's theme is: 'Spring at Houghton Hall Park', Spring has not sprung yet but it is starting to uncoil so let's see what images you can capture throughout the month, maybe take an image today then come back at the end of the month to see how much has changed? Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

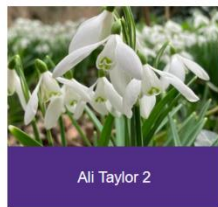
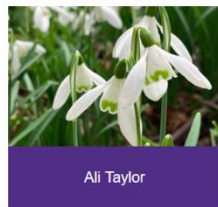
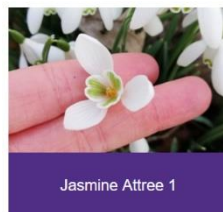
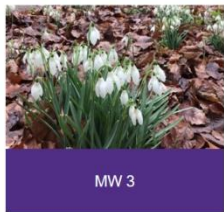
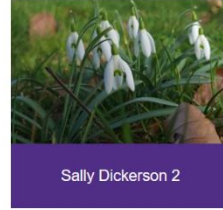
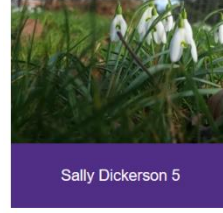
The images must be taken between 1st – 31st March 2023 and each person can submit up to 5 entries. We will not accept any overly photoshopped images that do not represent the reality of the subject in the photo. Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around 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 'Snowdrops' this is always a very popular theme as you can see from

the photos below, to see the full images go to our website.





Community Park Ranger Update

By Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger

Hello, February has come and gone and its starting to feel like spring again (apart from the threat of snow!)

The month has flown by with a lot of work going on in the park from coppicing to tree planting, litter picking and much more.



On this month's Sunday volunteer session, we did some tree planting in the East woodland. Some of you may remember that we planted in this location last year but due to the hot weather a few of the trees failed. This year we went back through and removed any trees that had failed as well as planted more trees. We planted a mixture

of: English Oak, Rowen, Field Maple, Hazel, Crabbe Apple, Wild Privet, Spindle, and also Gueldar rose, there may have been a few more species that I have forgotten!



After the tree planting, we did a litter pick in the East woodland. The amount of rubbish we found was terrible. Bags and bags of litter discarded, enough to fill a tonne bulk bag. Amongst all the new litter we also found various articles of 'historic' rubbish such as rusty chair bases and old fences.

March's volunteer session will be on the 19th of March. Due to it being Mother's Day it will be a shorter session from 10-12. We will be doing another site litter pick to get ready for the good weather. If

you would like to get involved, please feel free to email me:

Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Have a great month.

Many thanks

Eleanor

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.



A natural space for insects and bugs to live

March 20th marks the vernal equinox heralding spring, so hopefully we can look forward to warmer weather. Although in saying that, it was one of the driest February's in thirty years with the temperature jumping about from warm to very cold. This changeable weather is hard enough for us to cope with but causes all sorts of problems for wildlife. Insects start emerging, only to be killed off by a sudden frost, the ground is soft one day and hard as nails the next, water available then frozen solid. So, what can we do to help?

When thinking about wildlife we need to consider there is an ecosystem, from micro-organisms up through to larger species, providing a complete food chain. If one link in this chain is weakened or

broken, the next species along the chain gets into difficulty, with problems rippling upwards along the chain. For example, if we put food and water out for the birds, it only helps the food chain from the birds and upwards. It doesn't help lesser species back down the chain.



Frogs in my pond



Frog spawn

For this reason, as at the gardens, I follow the principles of permaculture and try to garden in harmony with nature. I mulch flower beds and around shrubs, not digging it in, leaving this for the worms to do. The reasoning behind this is, different organisms like to live at different levels within the soil, if you churn up the soil by digging, you are in effect turning their world upside down causing a breakdown in the continuity of the ecosystem. Although I like to see a tidy garden, during winter my garden can look a little unkempt. I don't remove any dead foliage from plants until I see new foliage coming through. I don't cut the lawn at least until April and then no shorter than 35mm with some areas of grass left uncut. This provides shelter for insects during cold spells and places to hide. I provide nooks and crannies for hibernating bugs, with piles of logs and stones. Most plants in my garden have

flowers with easy access for insects to get to the nectar. I also have a pond which although at the moment isn't looking its best, I am pleased to see, has lots of frogs and frogspawn. My overall aim is to create a harmony where no one species suffers or dominates and a healthy garden, totally in balance with nature.



Crocus growing through last season's dead foliage



My pond isn't tidy during the winter

Until next time.

Mark

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Community Gardener

Overall, the weather in February has been kind to us, meaning we can really get ahead for the growing season.

The team have been very busy tidying up the beds in the car park at the visitor's centre, keeping on top of the weeds in the formal garden and mulching the beds in the kitchen garden.

Seed sowing has started with the early varieties of herbs and flowers germinating nicely, fingers crossed we don't get a super cold spell (predicted as I type!).

Eleanor has been in the Kitchen Garden teaching us how to create Obelisks with Hazel and willow for growing sweet peas which have shaped up very nicely.

In the formal garden we are accessing any damage caused by the very cold spell in December. Some of the plants have a little bit of frost damage but we won't remove this until the risk of any further damage has passed.

As we head towards March it is with hope that the wintery weather will soon pass and signs of Spring type weather will arrive enabling us to really get on with the growing season ahead.

Regardless of the weather it is always a delight each day to arrive at the gardens and continue with our daily tasks to ensure they are looking nice for the frequent visitors to the park.

Hopefully by the time I write again the threatened snow will have passed and we are not having to wear our hats and winter coats anymore!

Until next time... 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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