

Houghton Hall Park

July 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.

July is here, and we are getting into the holiday mood, there's lots of new events and activities happening in the park this month.

What's On

Plant Sale

When: 12th & 26th July

Where: Houghton Hall Visitor Centre

Jenny our Community Gardener, and her team of volunteers from Silsoe Horticultural College, will be selling a huge variety of plants. She will also be on hand if you have any gardening questions. Come and grab a bargain!

Any leftover plants will be in the Visitors Centre Foyer over the weekend and can be paid for in the café. There will also be a stall at our Craft Fair on Sunday 21st July.



A great place to live and work.



Craft Fair and Busk in the Park

When: 21st July

Where: Houghton Hall Visitor Centre

Houghton Hall Park will be having our first Craft Fair inside the Visitors Centre on Sunday 21st July.

If you would like to sell your crafts at this event stalls are £12, please contact us on hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to book.

We are also excited to say that Ukie-toones will be providing musical entertainment by busking with their Ukuleles around the park 11am to 2pm.

Activity Sheets Launch

When: Week commencing 22nd July

Where: Houghton Hall Visitors Centre

To kick off the summer holidays three new activity trail sheets have been designed for Houghton Hall Park there will be 'Jump into Nature', 'Kitchen Garden Activities' and 'Heritage at Houghton Hall Park'. The sheets will be free and available in the Visitors Centre from Monday 21st July, all you will need is a pen or pencil!



The Storyteller's Garden

When: 24th July, 7th & 21st August

Time: Two sessions 10.30am to 12pm and 2pm to 3.30pm

Where: Meet at the Kitchen garden with crafts at the Visitors Centre

Meet the gardener who is growing stories, listen to the storyteller who's telling tales, then get creative with some story themed crafts. Suitable for children between 3 and 10 (all children must be accompanied by an adult)

Tickets are available at the café in the Visitors Centre and Houghton Regis Library - cash payments only, must be booked in advance.

Children's Totem Pole Competition

With the help of a wood sculptor we are turning the tree trunk by the wood stack play equipment into a totem pole and we'd like you to design it!

Your design should include elements of the park such as nature, heritage & the people that use it, let your imagination run wild!

You can pick up an entry form at the visitors centre or we can email you one, please send your request to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. Draw your design on the template on the back of the entry form and pop it in to the Visitors Centre or send via email. Closing Date 31st July.



Car park

If you are a regular visitor to the park you will have noticed our free parking ticket machine. We have listened to feedback regarding availability of car parking spaces at busy times, in 2018 additional parking bays were created to increase available spaces.

A free ticket machine is now in operation in order to reduce misuse of spaces by those not visiting the park, and further increase capacity for park users and visitors to the centre/cafe. **Parking will remain free, there will be no charge.** However, a ticket will need to be obtained from the machine and displayed if parking within the times of restriction (Monday – Friday 7am-6pm). The existing car parking regulations will remain as they are.

For further information contact hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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 21st** it's the meadows bug survey where you get to chase butterflies! We'll try to identify and record the different bugs we find. This will help to build a picture of the bug diversity found there, and help to identify if populations are stable, improving, or declining. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there!

We are also looking for volunteers to help us on our stall at Houghton Regis Town Council's carnival on Saturday 13th July and for our Storyteller's Garden summer holiday activities.

If you would like to help at any of these activities, please email: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know.



Monthly Photography Themes

If you ever take images in the park, even if they're not for our monthly photography themes, we would still love to see them and feature them in our newsletter so please don't forget to show us your snaps from your visit!

We welcome photographers of all abilities and ages to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes; **July's theme is: Getting Active in Houghton Hall Park.** There are so many groups and individuals that use the park now to keep active, let's celebrate that with your pictures this month.

Please send your submissions to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 31st July 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: http://houghtonhallpark.org/assets/documents/Photography_Theme_TCs-1.pdf

Here are the entries from June's theme: Wildflowers in Houghton Hall Park. We have been inundated, which is not a surprise as there is an abundance of wild flowers in the park now!



Trina Cooke Flower 3



Trina Cooke Poppy
Amongst The Thorns



Trina Cooke Flower 2



Sue Jenkins 1



Sharon Pullan Poppies In
The Park 3



Sharon Pullan Poppies In
The Park 2



Trina Cooke Flower 1



Sue Jenkins 3



Sue Jenkins 2



Sharon Pullan Poppies In
The Park 1



Ron Halling 5



Ron Halling 4



Cindy Lea Bee On
Common Ragwort



Alan Bullimore What Time
Is It Mr Wolf



Malcolm Lea Oxeye Daisy



Malcolm Lea Blue Geranium



Lucy Downs 2



Jacqui Barnes 2



Jacqui Barnes 1



Jack Montague



Lucy Downs 1



Jacqui Barnes 4



Jacqui Barnes 3



Helen Pocock Sunbathing Bug



Helen Pocock Poppy



Helen Pocock Pink Clover



Ron Halling 3



Ron Halling 2



Ron Halling 1



Rita Egan Blue



Rita Egan Blue Ladybird



Rhys White Poppy Dancing In The Rain



Rita Egan Yellow



Rita Egan White



Rita Egan Thistle Bee



Malcom Lea Buttercup



Malcolm Lea Thistle



Malcolm Lea Poppy



Helen Pocock Beautiful Blue



Dawn Booter Poppy The Poppies



Cindy Lea Poppy Field



Cindy Lea Poppies Blowing In The Wind



Cindy Lea Fly On Cow Parsley



Cindy Lea Comfrey

What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

Well what a great drop of rain we have had, so welcome as the ground was getting hard to dig. At least the weeds are coming out easy now!

The great thing about the formal garden as just as one thing goes over another plant starts to shoot up and show off its splendour.

The box hedging is responding well to the weather and is showing signs of new growth. We have recently replaced a lot of this as it had been scorched. You may have seen on the media about the latest threat on box is an inconspicuous caterpillar which is devastating hedges. I have included some information below from RHS website.

Box tree caterpillar

Box tree caterpillars feed within webbing and can completely defoliate box plants. It is a relatively new insect to Britain. Whilst the adult moth was first reported in Britain in 2007, caterpillars were not found in private gardens until 2011, it has since become widely distributed across England (particularly London and surrounding areas) and is present in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

What is box tree caterpillar?

*Box tree caterpillars are the larvae of a moth that feeds on [box](#) (*Buxus*) plants. It is native to East Asia and it became established in Europe in 2007. Although the first adult moth arrived in Britain during 2007, followed by several moths to light traps in 2008, it was not until 2011 that larvae were reported in private gardens in the home counties. By the end of 2014 the moth had become established in parts of London and surrounding areas; in many cases the caterpillars causes severe defoliation. For growers in the south-east of England it is now a problem that is likely to reoccur repeatedly throughout the growing season and in successive years. The moth is also becoming more widely established in England, parts of Wales and Ireland.*



Kitchen Garden

If you thought last month was exciting, you won't believe this one!

All the beds are growing well with regular produce being picked. We will be having a couple of produce sales days again in conjunction with Silsoe Horticultural college on July 12th and 26th at the visitor centre.

Please pop down and see what we are up to, and you never know we may be able to tempt you to get involved!

We are gradually harvesting the new potatoes and I can assure you they have been a tasty crop!



Job of the month



It is with great pleasure that I say without a doubt the job this month is PICKING the fruits of your labour! Pick your crops young and frequently so that you get the most out of your plants. Don't forget to feed them regularly as they will soon use up the goodness available to them.

Dead head your flowers and you will find that they will continue to provide you with a good many blooms for a longer period. This is also essential for our wildlife. I have noticed that there are a lot more birds around in the gardens since we have provided some water sources in the garden. This is fantastic news as they will keep your unwanted pests down without the need for a chemical bottle.

Speaking of beneficial insects, do you know what the larvae of a ladybird looks like. There are a lot about now, but don't mistake them for a bad bug! These little creatures will happily eat their body weight a day in aphids, managing an average of 5,000 in their life time!



Plant of the month

Lavender (Scientific Name: Lavandula)

This is one of the most fragrant and highly versatile herbs that you can grow. As you may already know, lavender is used in essential oils, perfumes, in aromatherapy, in traditional herbal medicine and in the kitchen as a culinary herb. Here are some other interesting facts about lavender that you may not know: The name Lavender comes from the Latin verb, "lavare," which means to wash

- *Lavender comes from the same family as mint (easily distinguished from the square stems)*
- *Back in the Elizabethan times, when baths weren't common practice, lavender was used to perfume clothes and bed linen*
- *The scent of lavender deters mice, flies, mosquitoes and other pests from the area*
- *Lavender oil can be used to soothe aching muscles and joints, reduce anxiety and stress, and to induce sleep*
- *Nectar from lavender plants are used to make high quality honey*
- *In the language of flowers, lavender can mean devotion, luck, success, happiness or distrust*
- *Lavender plants don't produce seeds; propagation is done by cutting or root divisions*
- *Most lavender plants are blue or purple, but there are some varieties that come in pink and yellow*

Community Links

This month we see the return of the scouting group who have been eager to help in the kitchen garden. It is our pleasure to have them back to Houghton Hall park as they get really stuck into the jobs as you will see from the photographs below!



Our band of volunteers have been busy weaving willow to support the bean structure in the kitchen garden. Come by and admire their handy work!

Our community garden is seeing an increasing number of volunteers and visitors. We love the fact you feel that you can drop in and see how we are doing.

Recently we have been offered some lovely items which we are able to recycle and re use, so thank you very much for your donations.

Happy gardening

Jenny



Summer is here, and the meadows are full of wild flowers & butterflies

by Mark Hogan

I was sat by the riverside watching a Canadian Goose mother with her 3 Young Goslings eating the grass on the river bank relaxing when all of a sudden, they saw a family of Swans coming towards them, so they went away and hid from them, but then the Cob (Male Swan) spotted them and chased the Geese away, the attack was quite ferocious and I am sure one of the Geese got hurt. An Adult Swan has been known to kill a Goose but, on this occasion, the adult and one of the



Canadian Geese

Goslings escaped further up river but it the other two

Goslings stranded in the reeds, then hid away so the Swan could not see them. It is something you do not really see very much but the Male Swan was performing and letting the Goslings know that they were not going anywhere near its Cygnets. It was just being a protective parent. After a while the Swans came over to the near bank and one of the Geese, the adult jumped up onto the bank and waddled off and waited up stream for the others.



Swans & Cygnets

A little while after, the two that had been chased upstream walked across the grass and ahead of the Swans, so the Swan moved off to catch them which left time for the remaining Gosling to come out and swim away to freedom too. It was a bit like a Tom and Jerry episode.

At Jordan's Mill they have a large meadow area which has all sorts of wildflowers from Oxy-daisies, Teasels and other plants that attract butterflies and all sorts of insects like damselflies. In the Gardens I saw a Cinnabar Moth which comes out in the daytime, it is red and black and very colourful, but it flies around constantly so it not easy to photograph.

Over the last month I have been on some interesting trips, a group of us went to the RSPB Minsmere Reserve in Suffolk, it is lovely, and it has two huge lakes with all sorts of summer visitors like Barnacle Geese, Avocet,



Tern

Common Terns, Kittiwakes and Common Terns too. It

also has huge sand dunes dividing the reserve from the sea. On the sand dunes we saw a lovely little bird on a Gorse bush called a Stonechat, the male has a black head and an orange breast, they are very pretty little birds and I was fortunate enough to get a good picture, we also saw a Herd of Highland Cattle, which were brown and were chilling out, laying down in a field.



Avocet

Minsmere was where they used to film Springwatch a couple of years ago and has loads of different habitats to encourage birds and wildlife into, they have a number of Otters and even birds like Spoonbill, unfortunately we never saw one of them. They have also built a sand wall nesting

habitat for Sand Martins which is great because they literally zoom out over your head from their nests at high speed.



Spoonbill

Last Sunday we went to one of my favourite reserves, it is called RSPB Frampton Marsh which is in Lincolnshire close to Spalding, it is similar to Minsmere, but the Lakes are bigger and wider.

We got a nice surprise when we went into the Visitor Centre because a Spoonbill was being viewed by a man on a Scope, so we all saw one within minutes of arriving which was very cool. We then set off for a walk around and came to a very ingenious hide, the 360 Degree Hide which is

surrounded by a lake on all sides and had an awful lot of things to see, like a huge number of Black Tailed Godwits, Bar Tailed Godwits, Ruff, Dunlin and even Kittiwakes. The best bird we saw was the Common Terns whooping around and landing on one of the far island nest sites. We then walked around the rest of the reserve, as we did we saw various Butterflies like the Painted Lady, Woodland Brown and birds like the Sedge Warbler, which are lovely little birds.



Sedge Warbler

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 send it hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and if it is good, we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or put it in next month's newsletter.

Written and Photography by Mark Hogan

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm



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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