

Houghton Hall Park

December 2022 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.



It has looked like a Christmas card these last couple of weeks in the park, the perfect setting for our Snowball Scavenger Hunt on the 11th December, 128 children took part in the trail and then the snowball finale in the kitchen garden, the frost and ice definitely lent itself to the atmosphere! Thank you to our volunteer team who helped on the day, being outside for a few hours in temperatures of -5 is no mean feat!

If you haven't visited the kitchen garden this month do pop along and take a look at the wonderful Christmas display the volunteers have created, we don't want to give too much away but it is based on a Christmas song, we think it is their best display yet!



December's photography theme is 'Festive Fun', we are guessing there has been some wonderful photos taken in the last few weeks, please send yours to hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk, we'd love to see them.








Our deluxe wreath workshops took place at the beginning of December, lots of fun was had at the Visitors Centre creating Christmas masterpieces, we also sold almost 100 make at home kits, here's a couple of photos which were sent in of the finished product, how great do they look?! We hope you have a wonderful Christmas and look forward to seeing you on the park in the new year.

A great place to live and work.



Christmas

Opening Hours

-  **Christmas Eve - 9am to 4pm**
-  **Christmas Day - 10am to 12pm**
-  **Boxing Day - 10am to 3pm**
-  **New Years Eve - 8am to 4pm**
-  **New Years Day- 9am to 4pm**



Find out more online at  www.houghtonhallpark.org



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What's On

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>

Parkrun & Junior Parkrun



When: Parkrun every Saturday and Junior Parkrun every Sunday

Time: 9am

Cost: Free!

A free, weekly, timed 5k/2k walk/jog/run at 9am every Saturday & Sunday. Open to all ages and abilities. Organised entirely by volunteers. Friendly and fun.

If you would like to take part but have not run before you will need to register at www.parkrun.org.uk

Plant of the Month – Christmas Rose



The Christmas Rose (*Helleborus Niger*) is a small perennial of the Buttercup family, it blooms from late Autumn to early spring often in the snow. Niger – meaning black refers to the colour of the roots. It has evergreen compound leaves, of seven or more leaflets arranged like the fingers on a hand, that arise directly on leafstalks from the crown of the plant. The striking flowers, of five coloured sepals, are whitish to pinkish green, and appear during the winter, often at Christmas as it is completely unaffected by snow or frost. The plants should be handled with care as can be an irritant to the skin. The flower represents purity.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer

Monthly Photography Themes

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

December's theme is: 'Festive Fun at Houghton Hall Park', with the snowy weather we've had this is the perfect theme this month! Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st December 2022 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 'Weathered Wood' we received some wonderful photos, thank you to everyone who submitted.

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles Central Bedfordshire

December's Photography Theme

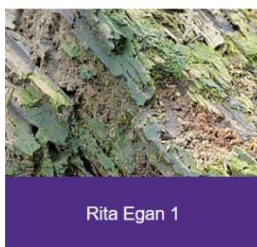
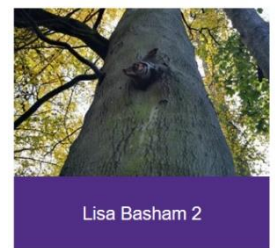
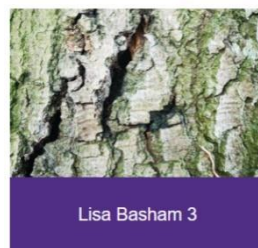
'Festive Fun' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

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

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

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Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

The cold snap of the past week along with the snow has given wildlife an extra challenge.



The cold weather has brought more birds to the feeders.

To help them out I've put out extra feeders in my garden and have been topping them up twice a day. In addition, I've scattered a variety of foods on clear spaces of ground, protected by plants growing in pots. I've also tied some extra fat balls to the top of a trellis fence, making it easier for the bigger birds to access. For this I have been rewarded by an almost constant influx of birds. Blackbirds generally have been the first to arrive, feeding in the dark well before sunrise. The increased numbers of greenfinches, goldfinches and tits have been amazing along with magpies and starlings.

Unusually the gulls have also ventured closer to the house, to grab peanuts from the bird table.

They fly in sizable a group around the garden until one of them builds up the courage to swoop down and grab a nut in a cautious flypast.

I've noticed such is the difficult challenge to find food, the usual rivalries between the birds seem to have been put to one side. The other day I looked out to see eight male blackbirds together in an apple tree halfway down my garden. Nor would I have expected to see two male robins so close to one another, bearing in mind they will fight to the death, defending their territory if need be. Either it's a case of, because I've

provided a plentiful supply of food, they are happy to accept the situation, or perhaps it's just too cold to start a fight, which would use up so much precious energy.

The squirrels have obviously been hunkering down, as they have been noticeable by their absence this past week. As they don't hibernate, they will only forage when hunger forces them to during extreme weather conditions. Being a bit warmer today, two did come to the feeders but they only stayed long enough to grab a quick snack. Normally they will spend half an hour or more at the sunflower heart feeders.

On a warmer note, an update on the Willie Wagtail nest in my brother's garden in Australia. Two of the three eggs hatched, and the birds fledged. By the way did you know the ancestors of all songbirds originated in Australia. In the northern hemisphere it is rare for female birds to sing, but down under it's quite common.

Finally, a date for your diary. The RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch takes place between 27th and 29th January. If you want to take part, you can get a free guide by calling 0800-473 0258 quoting BIRD36 or text BIRD36 to 70020 or go to rspb.org.uk/birdwatch

Wishing everyone a joyous Christmas and a peaceful 2023

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens



Woodpeckers love peanuts.



Two of the willy wagtail eggs hatched and have now fledged.



Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

To use from - The Garden:
Leek & Garlic



Cheesy Leeks

Ingredients:

6 large leeks
2 cloves of garlic
5 sprigs of fresh thyme
olive oil
1 knob of unsalted butter
100 ml single cream
100 g Cheddar cheese
50 g Parmesan cheese
100g Brie

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4.
2. Trim, wash and slice the leeks, about 2cm thick, at an angle. Peel and slice the garlic, then pick the thyme leaves.
3. Put a large casserole-type pan on a medium heat and add a drizzle of oil, the butter, thyme leaves and garlic.
4. Cook until it begins to bubble and fry, then stir in the leeks. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally.
5. At this point, you have two choices: You can either stir the rest of the ingredients into the leeks, grating in the Cheddar and Parmesan, and tearing in the brie, then put it into the oven to cook for 45 minutes uncovered, or, you can do the following...
6. Turn the heat under the pan down a little and cook the leeks for about 35 minutes, or until soft, stirring every now and then.
7. Season, then spoon it all into a dish, or leave in the pan.
8. Stir in the cream and splash of water, grate over the Cheddar and Parmesan, then pull the brie into parts and put on the top
9. Pop in the oven for 15 minutes, or until golden and bubbling.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer



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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