

Houghton Hall Park

September 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.

September is the month that Autumn arrives and there has been a noticeable shift in the temperature over the last week, with the change in the seasons Mark, our volunteer, has written a piece this month about how you can help the wildlife in your garden. Sue and Eleanor have all the updates from the gardens and park and you must take a look at the tasty Kitchen Garden recipe of 'Green Bean Mac & Cheese' from our volunteer Irene.

Thankfully we had a perfect day for the Dog Festival on September 11th, it stayed dry and wasn't too warm for the dogs. There were over twenty 'doggy' stalls including Royal's Dog Grooming, who are based at the Farmstead on the new Linnere development, they offered claw clipping and paw tidy packages which were very popular.



Rock Steady Flyball and Emma Sims Agility were also back again, dogs could have a go on each activity which was a joy to watch.



Accolade Hounds hosted the fun dog show for us, this popular event saw record numbers of dogs enter with half the proceeds going back to Accolade who find homeless hounds forever homes.

September's photography theme is dogs, if you have any photos from the Dog Festival please send them to us at hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk we'd love to see them.

There are many activities and events planned for the remainder of the year in the park, including autumnal wreath and table centre workshops, more info on these can be found on the 'What's on' pages of this newsletter, full listings of events in October can be found on our website www.houghtonhallpark.org

See you in October!

A great place to live and work.

What's On

Autumnal Wreath Workshop

When: Saturday 22nd October

Time: 10am to 12.30pm

Cost: £30

Join us this autumn and rustle up the perfect autumnal wreath, bringing the warm shades of the season straight to your door.

Combine fresh foliage, dried flowers and natural elements to craft your own unique autumn wreath.

The workshop costs £30 which includes expert instruction & wreath materials, you'll leave with a bountiful door decor for your autumn doorstep

For more information and to book visit our website:-

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/autumnal-wreath-workshop>



Harvest Table Centre Workshop

When: Saturday 22nd October

Time: 1pm to 4pm

Cost: £30

Join us on Saturday 22nd October and rustle up a harvest themed table centre, bringing the stunning shades of the season into your home.

With a candle at its centre, combine fresh foliage, dried flowers and natural elements to craft your own unique table centre.

The workshop costs £30 which includes expert instruction & table centre materials, you'll leave with a bountiful decoration for your home.

For both workshops we provide all the decorations and equipment you need, you take away the design you have made during the workshop.

You don't need any experience arranging flowers as all our workshops are suitable for beginners, don't worry if you're not artistic as we show you the basic techniques and leave you to create your own unique design

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

Friends of Houghton Hall Park Kitchen Garden Plant & Produce Sale



When: Every Thursday in the Kitchen Garden and the Visitors Centre

Time: 9.30am to 2pm (times may vary)

Cost: Donations to Friends of Houghton Hall Park

Weather permitting, our popular plant and produce stall will be back in the Kitchen Garden every Thursday, the range we have to offer will slowly grow over the coming weeks, including any spare plants we have. Thank you to everyone who supports us, as all the money raised is invested back into the gardens through the Friends of

Houghton Hall Park group. The table is usually set up ready for 9.30am, giving us time to freshly pick and prepare everything earlier in the morning.

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

Monthly Photography Themes

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

September's theme is: 'Dogs in Houghton Hall Park', it's the month of the Dog Festival so we had to go with our four-legged friends for the theme this month. Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 30th September 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 'Light' thank you to Sarah Rose for sending in this wonderful photo of the park at sunset.

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

September's Photography Theme

'Dogs' at Houghton Hall Park

It's the month of the Dog Festival so we had to go with our four legged friends as the theme!

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in September
- Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at: hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 30th September
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



Community Park Ranger Update

Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.

Here we are again, the year seems to be flying by, over the last few weeks there have been some changes in the park.



The meadow cut for this year has been completed, this is done every year in September to encourage and enhance the wildflower meadow. By cutting and clearing we remove the nutrients and create nutrient poor soil which wildflowers thrive in and it knocks back the grass which doesn't do so well without the nutrients. In previous years this cut has been done and the material bailed,

however with the extremely dry weather we have had this year we thought there would be less of a risk of fire by removing the material quickly.

Whilst out litter picking in the park the other day I came across a short-tailed field vole. He was probably living in the long grass and when it was cut moved under the trees for shelter. He'll find somewhere safe to hibernate for the winter and be back out in the field come April.



If you've been up in the gardens recently you may have seen me helping out Sue our gardener during the gardens busy time. You may have seen the massive pile of marrows that have been produced in the heat. Here's a picture of me and volunteer Linda with wheelbarrow 1 of 4!

Over the next month we will start doing more conservation in the park as bird nesting season comes to an end. If you would like to get involved and help volunteer in the park please email me on: Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Have a fantastic month, stay safe,

Many thanks

Eleanor

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

The recent change in the weather is a reminder that autumn is just around the corner. In fact, this year the autumnal equinox starts on 23rd of the month. I mention this because as the temperature drops many creatures will be starting to prepare for hibernation. So now is a good time to start thinking about creating a place in your garden for them. Hedgehogs for instance normally hibernate from late December until April, although this depends very much on the weather.

Shelters don't need to be elaborate, as any animal making use of them will arrange the material to suit its needs, but they do need to be in a place which will be left undisturbed. Disturbing a hibernating hedgehog, even accidentally, could be fatal by making it go on the hunt for a safer refuge. Gathering up fallen leaves and piling them up in a quiet part of the garden along with twigs can



Bees will forage on warm days in late winter.

provide a great winter home for a wide variety of mammals and insects. Birds also like a sheltered place to spend cold nights. One year I had a wren spend every night tucked up in a hanging basket, using a hole created in the compost where a plant had been. So later in the year I'll be putting a basket up with a few pockets around the side, in a sheltered spot at the bottom of my garden.

Don't forget as the days shorten, birds and mammals are feeding themselves up in preparation for winter, they will be foraging for

high protein food as they need to build up body fat to see them through the cold weather. I know many try to keep squirrels off their bird feeders, but they need to prepare as well. Whilst not actively encouraging them I do let them take some of the foods I put out, we need to help them survive the winter, so much of our wildlife has declined rapidly over recent years, therefore I take the view, help it before we lose it.

Now is also the time for thinking about buying and planting spring bulbs, as I keep bees I am looking for early flowering bulbs that will provide nectar and pollen for them. Honeybees don't hibernate as such; the numbers of bees will reduce dramatically as winter approaches the male drones are no longer needed and will be pushed out of the hive. The remaining female workers will huddle around the queen and keep her warm. On sunny days some of these bees may venture out to top up stores, so having early flowers nearby will keep them happy. I have also put a pack of fondant mixed with pollen in the hive to ensure they have enough food as well. With climate change it's not that unusual to get a few warm days in February and many other pollinators may emerge too, so these will also benefit from the early flowers. I will be planting winter aconites, snow drops and crocuses to give the earliest flowers. I'm also putting in grape hyacinths and alliums which are a particular favourite of bees. Surprisingly bees don't like daffodils, so my focus will be on other spring bulbs to plant this year.

Until next time

Mark



I help the squirrels build up for winter.



Winter aconites are a good source of food for pollinators.

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Houghton Hall Park Community Gardener

And finally, it rained...!

After a long, hot, and dry summer finally the rain arrived, which was a welcome sight for us, and all the plants in the kitchen and formal gardens.

The beautiful warm weather has helped to produce an abundance of crops and brought so many welcome visitors to the gardens, but a little bit of rain gave a little bit of light relief from the watering!

It's been a bumper month for our crops and a lot of time has been spent by the volunteers harvesting and preparing the produce.

Visitors to the gardens on a Thursday have welcomed the opportunity to try a variety of the produce from the Friends of Houghton Hall Park Produce Shop.

In addition, we are now working in partnership with the Dunstable foodbank (Dunstablefoodbank.org.uk) to which we have donated fresh produce from the gardens and dry food donated by our volunteers.

The cut flower bed has been a beautiful array of colour and vibrancy and many visitors to the gardens have left with a beautiful display presented in glass jars that have been carefully hand painted by our talented volunteers.



The end of the school summer holidays saw us say goodbye to the seaside bed that delighted and amused visitors all summer.

The team have already begun to prepare for the next display and spent a lovely afternoon/evening working together to create the props for the display. Giving us all a break from gardening and a chance for a good catch up while we crafted away!

As Autumn is slowly starting to creep in work is now underway to prepare the formal garden ready for the winter. Cutting back, tidying and

mulching will now start to happen with vigour ready for the beds to rest for the winter. Even though the summer is slowly ending we are already starting to plan for next year, excitedly preparing our bed and planting plans. It's been a great summer with lots of visitors to the gardens, days of extreme heat, hours of watering and picking crops, seed sowing, potting on, weeding, planting out, tidying up, emptying wheelbarrows, painting, building, litter picking, crafting, floristry....to name but a few things that happen each day in the gardens. But most of all, we have lots of laughter, chatter, and cake!

Until next month, take care.

Sue,

Community Gardener.





Plant of the Month – Dahlia

Dahlias come in a range of flower shapes, from small tight balls to lily-like blooms the size of dinner plates and bloom from July to October. Dahlias hail from central America – they were brought to Europe by the Spanish, along with potatoes and tomatoes, initially for eating.

Dahlias like plenty of sunshine a fertile, moist but well-drained soil, and a sunny, sheltered spot. The taller varieties need staking. Dahlias make brilliant and prolific cut flowers – the more you cut them, the more flowers they produce. Most dahlias are not attractive to pollinators so, when planting include some single-flowered varieties if you can – these are popular with bees and butterflies. Dahlias are tender and need protection in Winter. In Autumn, dig up the tubers and overwinter them in a frost-free place, such as a greenhouse or a shed. Bring them back into growth in early April, then plant out in the garden from May onwards.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer



Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

**To use from - The Garden:
Runner Beans & French Beans**



Green Bean

'Mac and cheese'

Ingredients:

2 tbsp rapeseed oil
3 tbsp wholemeal flour
500ml milk
1 tsp ground nutmeg
350g macaroni (or other pasta tubes)
185g sliced runner beans
220g fine green beans
140g mature cheddar, half chopped, half grated
25g pumpkin seeds
peppery salad (such as rocket & watercress), to serve (optional)

Method:

1. Put the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat, add the flour and stir well. Still stirring, slowly pour in a little of the milk and mix well until smooth. Add a little more milk, repeating until all the milk has been added and you have a smooth sauce. Stir in the nutmeg, season, then take off the heat while you cook the pasta.

2. Heat oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the macaroni and boil for 8 mins. Add the runner beans and green beans, and boil for a further 3 mins.

3. Drain the pasta and the beans, and tip into a large gratin dish. Pour over the prepared sauce and tuck the chopped cheese in among the pasta, then top with the grated cheese and pumpkin seeds. Bake for 10-15 mins or until the top is bubbling and golden. Serve with a peppery salad, if you like.

[pate]

Irene Copperwheat Houghton Hall 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



LOTTERY FUNDED