

Houghton Hall Park

June 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.



June has arrived, the kitchen garden has been preparing for a royal visit! Her Majesty is now in residence in the jubilee bed with her troops, corgi, crown and bunting all created and made by our dedicated volunteers, you can see a photo in Sue's garden update.

During half term children were able to take part in the Platinum Jubilee Beacon trail around the park along with two drop-in Jubilee arts and craft sessions. Bunting was made for the café windows along with memory boxes, jigsaws, bookmarks and badges, a great time was had by all and the bunting looks fantastic!

There are a number of activities taking place in the park over the next month, we have a Seed Bomb Workshop on Saturday 18th June, our new Classics in the Park motor show on Sunday 3rd July and the Kitchen Gardens will be having an open day on Saturday 9th July, to find out more read our 'What's On pages'



The wildflowers are starting to appear in the meadow, why not take a few photos for this month's photography theme which is, you've guessed it, wildflowers!

Sue, our new Community Gardener, has been in post five weeks you can find out how she's been getting on in her first gardens update. Eleanor has been busy with the volunteers rejuvenating an unloved part of the park, discover which bit in her monthly update. Mark, our volunteer, has written a very interesting nature piece on the mullein moth and Irene, another volunteer, has not only provided us with a plant of the month we now also have recipe of the month which will surely make your mouth water. Have a great month and we'll catch up again in July!

A great place to live and work.

What's On

Seed Bomb Workshop

When: Saturday 18th June

Time: 10.30am and 11.30am

Cost: £3.50 per person

Come to the Visitors Centre on Saturday 18th June and make your own seed bombs!

Using a combination of compost, flower seeds and clay your little ones will create small 'bombs' which can be thrown into patches of green, releasing pockets of seeds which will eventually turn into a micro habitat for bees, moths and insects – as well as creating a beautiful floral landscape.

You will also be decorating a box for your bombs, these could be the perfect gift for Father's Day. The workshop will be 45 minutes and costs £3.50. Suitable for ages four upwards, adults must stay with their child throughout.

Book on our website at:- <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/seed-bomb-workshop>

Classics in the Park

When: Sunday 3rd July

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £5 to enter a vehicle

Our first Classics in the Park event will take place on Sunday 3rd July, set in our beautiful park it's a day not to be missed, especially if you love classic cars. We will have five different categories of vehicle on display, you will also have the chance to vote for your favourite vehicle.

Along with the cars we will have a selection of our popular craft and produce stalls. Swing Dance MK will be providing the entertainment from 12pm, they will be showing us their moves and also giving you a chance to join in! The Stick Man trail will be out in the park for the kids to burn off some energy.

If you would like to show your vehicle entries cost £5, this includes a souvenir of the day, there will also be trophies for the winners of each category and rosettes for the runners up. Bookings can be made on our website: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/classics-in-the-park>

If you are a group and would like to enter please email hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk, there is a limit of ten vehicles per group. The closing date for entries is Friday 24th June.



Stickman Trail



When: Sunday 3rd July

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: Free!

To coincide with our Classics in the Park event our popular Stick Man trail will be up in the park on 3rd July. Come down and visit our fun-filled activity trail featuring popular picture book character Stick Man. The self-guided trail is aimed at encouraging children aged 3-7 to get outdoors and explore the natural world and find out how things grow. If you want to 'twig' how much fun trails can be, then visit us 10am to 3pm.

Pop-Up Tasty Creative Stalls

When: Every weekend in the Visitors Centre Foyer

Cost: £10 per day

We offer the foyer space in the Visitors Centre every weekend to local crafters as an opportunity to showcase their work with a pop-up stall, stalls cost £10 per day and can be booked on our website:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/pop-up-tasty-creative>



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

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.

Kitchen Garden Open Day



When: Saturday 9th July

Time: 10am to 3pm

On Saturday 9th July the Kitchen Gardens will be open for you to enjoy, this is the same day as the Houghton Regis Carnival. The gardens will be open from 10am with a produce/plant sale starting at 12pm, visitors will have the chance to view the kitchen garden and new wildlife pond, we will also have pond dipping samples children can view with bug identification charts. There will be a children's

craft activity to make yoghurt pot jelly fish for the summer seaside bed, we will close the gardens around 3pm. We are now able to take credit card payments. If you would like to become a Friend of Houghton Hall Park, forms will be available, a 12 month membership is just £1.50

Monthly Photography Themes

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

June's theme is: 'Wildflowers in Houghton Hall Park' we would love to see what you capture, it's looking very picturesque at the moment with all the cowslips and buttercups flowering! Please send your submissions to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 30th June 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, in our monthly newsletter and our new calendar.

Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography

May's theme was 'The Meadow' in Houghton Hall Park, thank you to Graham Timbs for sending in a picture of his dog Ruby enjoying the meadow!

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles
Central Bedfordshire

June's Photography Theme

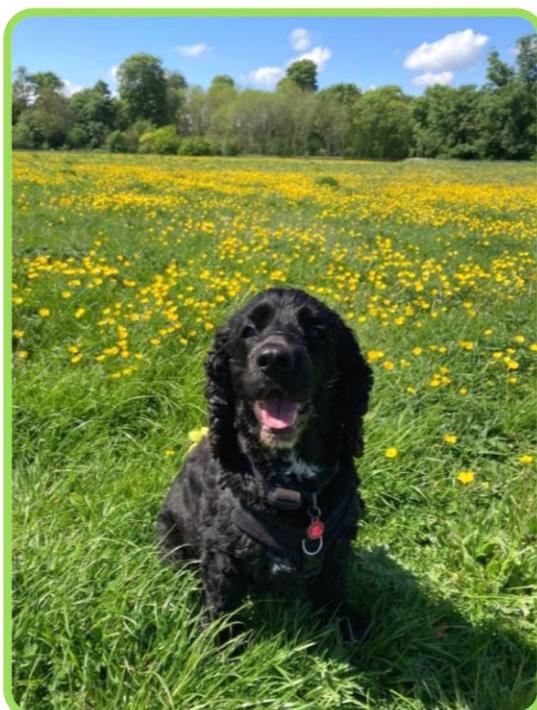
'Wildflowers' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in June
- 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: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 30th June
- 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.

May seems to have flown by, from clearance work, litter picking and clearing off paths, it's been go, go, go in the park.

This month we started work on the old den building area that things had started to grow in over lock down. With the help of some students from a local school we have managed to start clearing it and it will hopefully soon be back in order! Whilst clearing there was some excitement as the boys found a frog which we managed to pick up and move to a safer area.

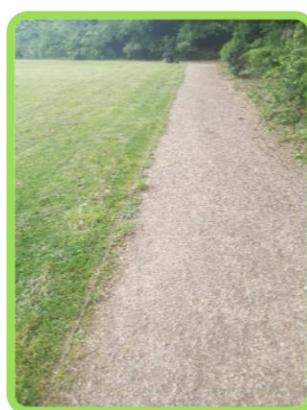


For this month's monthly volunteer session, we did a large litter pick in the park. The litter had mounted up again, which is a shame as there are plenty of bins around, but thanks to some fantastic volunteers we managed to clear a lot of it and the park is now looking lovely.

With my Thursday volunteers we started clearing off the path near the cedar tree, grass and plants had started to take over the path and it was looking very messy. With a little bit of work and some fantastic volunteers I'm sure you'll agree it looks far better now!



Before



After



If you want to get involved with volunteering in the park or want to find out more please email me on: Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

This month we are halfway through the year with June 21st marking the summer solstice which happens to be longest day and the start of summer. Where does the time go? My birdfeeders have been in constant use with birds visiting until it starts to get dark. It's no wonder some need to be replenished twice a day. New fledglings coming and going with their respective



A digger wasp takes a rest

parents. Woodpeckers are daily visitors for peanuts, finches, robins and tits flitting back and forth between the feeders with sunflower hearts and the safety of an old apple tree. Starlings head straight for the fat ball feeder. A pair of blackbirds have learnt from the smaller birds how to get at the food, whilst magpies, crows and pigeons loiter underneath scrabbling for anything that falls to the ground. The squirrels have worked out it's best to get in early with four of them turning up around six in the morning. With only room for two at

a time, noisy squabbles often break out as they chase each other around the garden. Apart from the hive of activity around the feeders it's amazing how much wildlife you can miss if you don't keep an eye out for it. This week I found a moth *Noctua pronuba* sheltering on a flowerpot, soon afterwards saw a field digger wasp, shield bug and the sunshine has brought out several species of butterflies. It's been a real feast of nature.

Which brings me to the subject of this month's Nature Notes. I was pottering in my garden recently and spotted a colourful caterpillar which I hadn't seen about for several years. It is certainly a first in my current garden, which I have been developing over the past two and a half years. For a year prior to moving in, most of the area hadn't been cultivated with only the grass being cut and weeds kept to a minimum.

It was the caterpillar of the Mullein moth, *Cucullia verbasci*, which has a very unusual life cycle. The majority of its life span is spent underground in the pupae stage, which can last anything up to five years.

The dull brown moth is a far cry from its former beauty as a caterpillar. Emerging any time between late April and June and despite having a wing span of 50 to 60 millimetres they are rarely seen, because they generally fly at night. Once mated the female will lay her eggs on the underside of leaves, on which the emerging caterpillar will feed. The plant of choice is verbascum, a large genus of flowering plants in the figwort family. The moth derives its name from the woolly or common mullein, *Verbascum Thapsus*, which is native to Britain. The tiny white eggs are laid singly, so are not easy to spot and gradually turn grey before hatching around ten days later. Its

colourful markings seem to be very effective in protecting it from predators as it feeds quite openly by day and night. They are voracious feeders and can strip a plant bare over the thirty days they



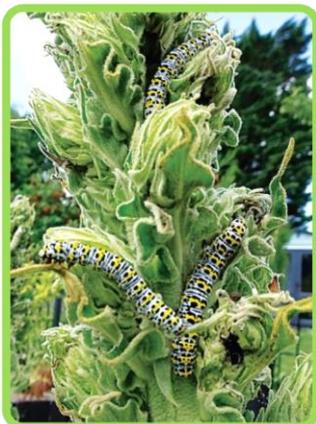
A Noctua Pronuba moth resting on a flower pot



Colourful markings give the caterpillar protection



The Mullein Moth



Mullein caterpillars feed
24/7

spend as caterpillars. Fortunately for me they seem to have restricted themselves to just one of my plants, so I'm happy to let them chomp away in return for the joy of seeing them. Besides verbasicum is a relatively short-lived plant, usually dying after setting seed. Either way, the one they have chosen, being a large specimen and not getting the chance to flower this summer, should survive and come up again next year.

After a month of gorging, the plump caterpillar at 5-6cm long, will bury itself just below the soil surface. Here it will create a tough cocoon around itself, strengthened with soil particles and small stones. It will emerge again in any of the next five years to start the cycle again.

This is probably an insurance against a bad season. If all the pupae emerge the following year, numbers could be decimated

by bad weather or lack of food plants. By spacing their emergence over several years they hedge their bets and protect their numbers.

Northamptonshire is about as far north where there are regular sightings of the mullein moth, as only sporadic sightings are found in Leicestershire and beyond. So here in Bedfordshire we are close to its most northerly territory, but with climate change who knows how long this will be the case.

If anyone is interested, next month sees the start of the Big Butterfly count. It runs between the 15th July and 7th August. For more information, search Butterfly Conservation.



Ants attack a caterpillar which vomits in defence

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Houghton Hall Park Community Gardener

As the new Community Gardener at Houghton Hall Park, it has been a busy five weeks!

I officially started in my new role on the 10th May and have been spending my time learning about the park and gardens, getting to know the fantastic team of volunteers and meeting the regular and friendly visitors and dog walkers in the park. It's so nice to spend each day saying hello to people as the walk past or come into the kitchen garden. I've received a really warm welcome from everybody.



The team of volunteers have been busy helping me find where everything is and showing me the ropes!

I have quickly discovered that each of the valued volunteer team have such a wide range of knowledge and skills and have been an

immense help in sharing this knowledge and ideas, for which I have been so grateful for in the early weeks in my new role.

Jenny, my predecessor, has also been kind enough to come to the gardens and spend some time providing me with a great handover and the opportunity for me to ask questions.



At the gardens it has been busy month of seed sowing, planting out and harvesting the lovely crops.

Two produce sales have been successful with many visitors taking the opportunity to sample the wonderful array of vegetables grown in the kitchen

garden. With the volunteers arriving early to harvest the produce freshly for the day's sale.

The team have been busy building a fruit cage to protect the strawberry bed. The extra height to the cage will offer brilliant protection but will mean harvesting the strawberries will be a much easier task. Already this week the strawberries have started to ripen, thanks to the lovely spell of sun we have had!

This month also saw the Queens Platinum Jubilee and to celebrate the team put out a lovely display of bunting, red, white and blue flowers and of course the Queen and her corgis! It is so nice to see visitors to the park stop and take photos of this fun and celebratory display.



In the formal gardens we have been busy tending to the beautiful flower beds, working to keep them weed free and clearing up any fallen leaves. Much laughter can be heard from the flower beds as the team are busy working away.

The produce hut is well under way with the addition of the door and hatch being added, we are just waiting for delivery of the roof for this project to be near completion and for the grand opening!

Over the next few weeks, we will continue to be very busy; seed



sowing, potting on, planting, harvesting, watering and weeding in the kitchen and formal gardens. The weather is looking hot and sunny over the next week so we will be spending a lot of time ensuring the plants get the water they need!



That's all from me for now, other than just to say how pleased and excited I am to have started in my new role as Community Gardener and have the opportunity to be part of such a beautiful place and brilliant team.

Sue Beard

Community Gardener Houghton Hall Park.

Plant of the Month – Delphinium

Nothing quite beats the drama of Delphiniums. In June and July, they produce towering flower spikes that can reach over 2m tall.



They are probably best known for their vivid sapphire blue shades, but they also come in mauve, pink, white and even red. The flowers can be single or double, depending on the variety. Delphiniums are a cottage garden and herbaceous border staple, bringing height and colour. The flowers are loved by bees. Delphiniums need protecting from slugs in spring, staking, moist soil and plenty of feeding. If you cut them down to the ground after flowering, you may be rewarded with a second flush of flowers in September. Delphiniums are in the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*). The word Delphinium comes from the Greek *Delphinus*, meaning dolphin, probably because of the

shape of the opening flowers. Their common name, Larkspur, dates back to Tudor times.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer



Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

To use from - The Garden:
Asparagus and Garlic



Roasted Asparagus

Ingredients:

1 bunch of thin Asparagus spears, trimmed
3 tablespoons of Olive Oil
1½ tablespoons of Parmesan cheese
1 clove finely chopped Garlic (optional)
1 teaspoon of sea salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 tablespoon of lemon juice (optional)

Method:

1. Preheat an oven to 220° C
2. Place the asparagus into a mixing bowl, and drizzle with the olive oil. Toss to coat the spears, then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, garlic, salt, and pepper. Arrange the asparagus onto baking sheet in a single layer.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until just tender, 12 to 15 minutes depending on thickness. Sprinkle with lemon juice just before serving.



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 hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

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Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Mon – Sun 9am to 4pm



Central
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