

Houghton Hall Park

November 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.



There was lots of fun to be had in the park over October especially during half term. We hosted Bedfordshire Libraries Big Sculpture Art Workshop where the fabulous Netty created a stunning butterfly out of recycled materials with the help of lots of children. Here's a picture of the butterfly midway through construction, the finished piece is now on display in the Visitors Centre foyer we think it really brightens the space and hope you enjoy seeing it on your visit.

Our Halloween event took place on the evening of Sunday 30th October. Over 150 children came to the park to conquer the Halloween trail and meet some creatures of the night in the witches' hollow, these creatures included an owl, bearded dragon, rat and leaf insect! We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped out preparing for this event and on the night itself, our small team couldn't do it without them!



Our volunteers also created the remembrance bed currently on display in the Kitchen Garden, beautiful and poignant as always. There is something very festive being planned for December, watch this space!

We are now in full Christmas mode preparing for wreath workshops and kits, a carols and crafts evening and the Snowball Scavenger hunt, for more details on these please read the what's on pages below.

A great place to live and work.

What's On

Festive Wreaths at Home

Collection: 2nd & 3rd December

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £22

Our ever-popular festive wreath kits will be available to purchase again this year!

Enjoy making a festive wreath in the comfort of your own home at a day/time that suits you, why not make a day of it with some friends? Grab the mince pies and mulled wine and get creative!

Each kit will include:

Circular oasis base, fresh foliage, ribbons/bows, wires, ornaments/decorations and full instructions on paper and video to make the design.

You will need to provide your own scissors/secateurs.

Visit our website for further information and to book:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/festive-wreaths-at-home>



Willow Angel Workshops

When: 9th December

Time: 1pm to 3pm

Cost: £18

Come and join us at Houghton Hall Park and have a go at weaving an angel out of willow.

Using traditional techniques that are used for basket weaving create your own Christmas decoration under the instruction of Park Ranger Eleanor.

No experience or tools needed, everything you will need will be provided and by the end of the session you will have your very own angel to take home *

*Fairy lights not included.

Snowball Scavenger Hunt

When: 11th December

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £4 per child

Join us in the park on Sunday 11th December for some snowball fun!

Santa's elves have hidden ten giant snowballs around the park, using the what3words* app see if you can find them all and work out the Christmas clues on each one.

Once you have found all ten snowballs come along to the kitchen garden and take part in the finale, 1,000 snowballs have appeared, can you find five with different Christmas pictures on? Take them to Santa's elves in their cabin for your Christmas treat, watch out for our cheeky elves!

For more information and to book visit:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/snowball-scamenger-hunt>



Christmas Carols & Crafts Evening



When: 14th December

Time: 6pm to 8.30pm

Get into the Christmas spirit and join us in the park this for traditional carols with the Salvation Army, you can also pick up some Christmas presents in the Visitors Centre from a selection of local craft stalls, whilst enjoying Christmas treats in the café.

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



Grab a jab at the COVID Vaccination Site

The Vaccination site will be located at Houghton Hall Park on:

Thursday 3rd November

Wednesday 9th November

Thursday 17th November

Wednesday 23rd November

Between: 9am-4pm

- **Closing time is dependent on vaccine availability**

Vaccines available:

- Autumn booster dose
- Booster dose

If you want any dose other than the Booster, please visit a Covid Mass Vaccination Site

For more information about vaccine locations and who is eligible please visit:

www.blmkhealthandcarepartnership.org/covid-19

**Central
Bedfordshire**

This Vaccination Site has been set up by Central Bedfordshire Council

Monthly Photography Themes

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

November's theme is: 'Weathered Wood at Houghton Hall Park', it's the perfect season for this theme we are looking forward to seeing your different interpretations. Please send your submissions to

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 30th November 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 'Autumn Leaves' we received some fantastic photos this month, thank you to everyone who submitted.

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

November's Photography Theme

'Weathered Wood' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in November
- 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 30th November
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED





Rita Egan 5



Rita Egan 4



Photography Passion JT 5



Photography Passion JT 3



Photography Passion JT 2



Photography Passion JT 1



Ruth Jenkins 2



Ruth Jenkins 3



Rita Egan3



Ruth Jenkins 1



Rita Egan1



Rita Egan2



Catherine Aganoglu

Community Park Ranger Update

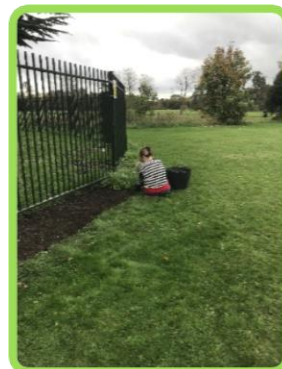
Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.

Autumn is officially here: Leaves falling, the weather finally getting cooler the night's drawing in. It also means it is time for practical conservation within the park. March to October is bird nesting season. This means that hedge work, tree work and anything that could disturb nesting birds is not allowed to be done. We are now out of bird nesting season which means we can begin coppicing again, do hedge work, tree planting, cutting back and clearance work and much, much more!

With this in mind we started tackling some of the large hazel stools on the west side of the park. These stools are massive and have been neglected over time. The stool was so big that we didn't manage to get it completed in the session so will come back to it later in the month!



With autumn comes leaves and with leaves comes clearing up! The fantastic volunteers did an amazing job clearing the leaves in and around the kitchen and formal garden making it look tidy and neat! The volunteers have also been doing some weeding around the cedar tree to get it ready for the coming growing season when all the bulbs will start to grow.



If you would like to get involved with volunteering in the park please feel free to email me at: Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Have a great month!

Stay safe.

Many thanks

Eleanor

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.

From the iridescent plumage of magpies in my October nature notes, the subject this month focuses on one of the most colourful birds to visit gardens, the Goldfinch. Their highly coloured plumage once put them on the endangered species list, due to the high numbers being taken from the wild, for keeping in captivity. But now they can be found in most areas of Britain with the highest concentrations in the south.

Once considered almost exclusively a farmland bird, with the growing popularity of bird feeders, Goldfinches have become regular visitors to gardens in urban environments. They are

seed eaters, a favourite

being the teasel and it's their

association with this plant, their long beaks have evolved and given them their scientific name *Carduelis carduelis*. This

derives from the Latin word for thistle, *Carduus*. The Anglo-Saxons also associated them with teasles and called them

Thistletuige meaning thistle

tweaker. Being very social birds

they are often seen in largish

flocks in gardens, but this

community spirit doesn't stop

them squabbling over food, where it's a case of every bird for

itself. When alerted to possible

danger they take off en-masse giving out a flight call a bit like a tinkling bell. This may be why the collective name for a group of Goldfinches is 'A Charm', which may have derived from the Latin word *Carmen* which means magic song.

Goldfinches leave nesting until quite late into the year, with their first brood around June and the last as late as September.

This means they are feeding their young when there is a plentiful supply of seeds.

Their deeply cupped nests are made of grass and strips of bark and lined with wool and are highly insulated.

Often, they will carefully take lichen from trees and decorate the outside of the nest giving it a degree of camouflaging. Once complete the female will lay five or six eggs and for the two weeks of incubation will stay on her eggs, relying on her mate to bring her food. Once hatched the fledglings are fed mostly regurgitated seeds.

Not all Goldfinches migrate, some preferring to stay on home territory.

Those that do leave, go to either Belgium or France, with a few heading down as far as southern Spain.

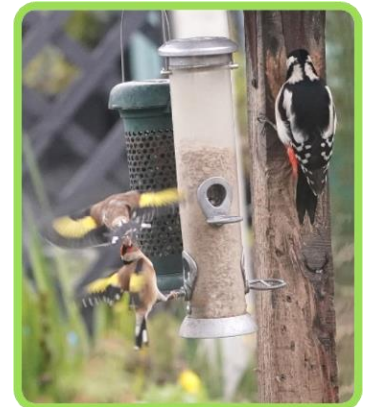
If you want to encourage these beautiful birds into your garden, I have found that sunflower hearts are best, I have tried niger seed, but they ignored it completely. They also seem to like a bit of nearby cover and frequent the feeders near an apple tree in my garden. Because their diet is



Showing the varied colours of the goldfinch



A woodpecker taken by surprise as a goldfinch spreads its wings



Squabbles often break out



Getting busy at the feeders

almost exclusively seeds, a supply water is crucial. They also love bathing and do so regularly, sometimes large groups all splashing about together. So, with a feeder or two with seed along with a bird bath you should have success in attracting them.

Before I finish, I thought you might like to see a picture my brother sent me from Western Australia. It's spring time there, so the birds there are nesting now. The picture is of a Willy Wagtail nest with three eggs taken in his garden. Built of grass the nest is held together with cobwebs carefully applied by the birds and is a speciality of Willy Wagtails.



This is an Australian Willy Wagtail nest held together with cobwebs

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens



Plant of the Month – Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum flowers are the second most popular flowers in the world next to the Rose and are believed to represent happiness, love, longevity and joy. First cultivated in China as a flowering herb it is described in writings as early as the 15th Century B.C. The Japanese subsequently adopted the flower and

were so enamoured with it that they gave it the status of royalty. The flower is used on the Emperor's official seal and crest, and the highest level of decoration that can be awarded to an individual for distinguished service to the nation is the 'Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum'. The Japanese have a National Chrysanthemum Day, the Festival of Happiness. Kiku is the Japanese word for Chrysanthemum

The flowers have many different forms, from open daisies to multi-petalled pompoms, large and small and they come in lots of colours and shades and prefer a warm sheltered spot.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Houghton Hall Park Community Gardener

What a busy month this has been preparing for the Winter.

The trees are now shedding leaves at a rapid pace and our constant battle to rake them up has proven to be a challenge assisted by the gentle breeze!



In the formal garden we have been busy weeding, raking leaves, cutting back and mulching, which has meant the compost heap has become a mountain. Luckily, this week this was emptied for us, and to our delight deep down in the heap was some lovely compost which we will be able to use to mulch in the park.



In the kitchen garden we have been clearing the beds and planning for next years' growing. Even though we have many weeks ahead before next spring there is so much preparation and tasks to complete spring will arrive soon enough and growing will begin again.



Our second cage has been erected ready for planting brassicas next year and will help us protect the crop and mean that harvesting will become a lot easier.

The story telling bed became a display for Remembrance, and with Christmas just around the corner the team have been working hard behind the scenes to prepare for our Christmas display.

The days have stayed mild which has been great for being able to carry on with tasks without our teeth chattering, long may that continue!

Until next time, take care and Happy Gardening!





Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

To use from - The Garden:
Cabbage and Onions



Cabbage with bacon and Onions

Ingredients:

1 onion - sliced
50g butter
200g smoked lardon, or diced bacon
1 Savoy Cabbage
150ml boiling water

Method:

1. Fry the onion in butter for 2 mins, then add the bacon and cook for a few mins more until golden.
2. Stir in the cabbage and boiling water. Cook for 2 mins over a medium heat until wilted, then cover, turn the heat to low and cook for another 5 mins.
3. Uncover and stir well; the cabbage should have a little colour. If not, increase the heat and cook for a few moments more. Season to taste.

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