

Houghton Hall Park

December 2018 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.

Can you believe we are now in December? We can't! Another year has flown by and we are over the moon with Houghton Hall Park's very first calendar year of being open. We would like to thank all you wonderful visitors for keeping us going and for all the positive encouragement. We have loved meeting many of you on a daily basis & at our events that have taken place in 2018. We hope you have enjoyed the recent developments at Houghton Hall Park and hope you enjoy many more walks in the park in 2019, stopping in for yummy food & drink in our dog-friendly café and we're looking forward to continuing to offer you a range of events and activities to enjoy in the New Year. From all of us at Houghton Hall Park, we wish you a very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

Santa's Polar Adventure Pantomime



When: Sunday 16th December

Time: 10-11am

Price: Adults £2, Children £5, under 1's free

How to book: email hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to book your space!

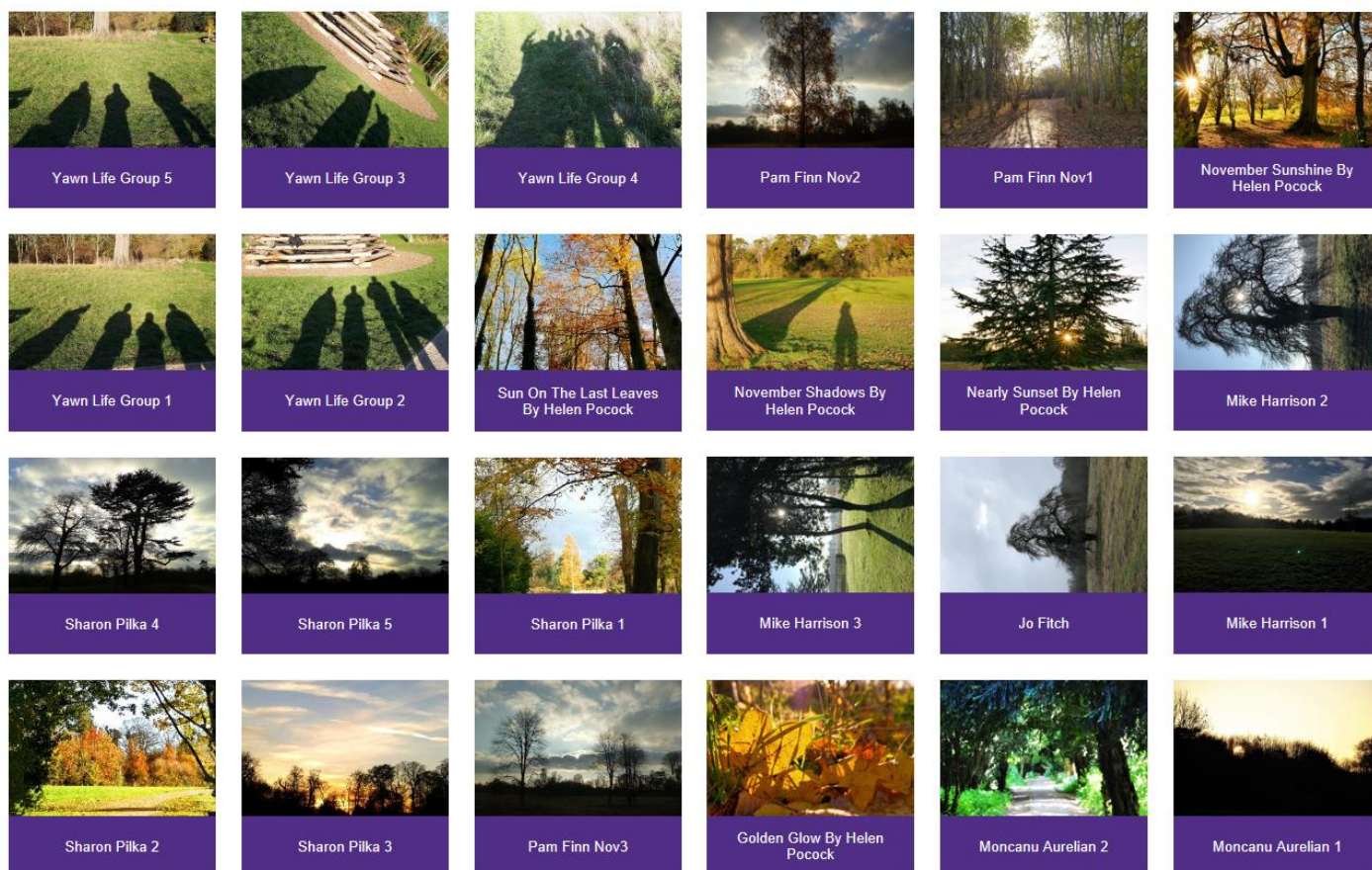
A magical festive story of a young polar bear and his quest to rescue Father Christmas. See him on an epic journey in this fun, family Pantomime! An enchanting and magical music score, stunning costumes and scenery and more panto comedy than you can shake an icicle at... this is the ultimate feel good Christmas show!

A great place to live and work.

Monthly Photography Themes

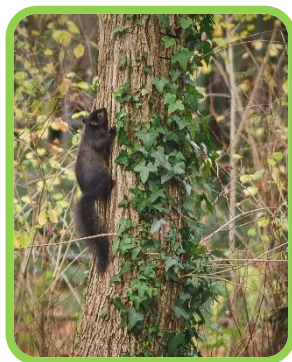
We welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes, **December's theme is: Winter trees in Houghton Hall Park.** We hope you have fun capturing some of the bare and twiggy trees creatively in Houghton Hall Park. We can't wait to see what you send us. Please send your submissions to hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 31st December 2018 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 and conditions before submitting your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography.

Below are some entries from November's theme: Winter Sun in Houghton Hall Park. We are delighted to share the beautiful wintery sun images captured in Houghton Hall Park by our lovely visitors:



Black squirrel spotted

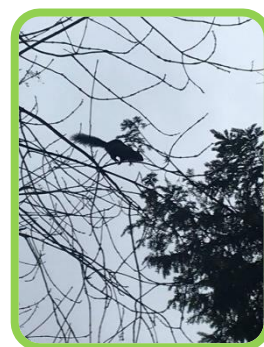
As many of you may know we have a few black squirrels in the park, recently we have had some lovely shots sent in by visitors and we are pleased to share these images with you:



Lisa McGill
PHOTOGRAPHY



Michelle Brophy



Shannon Butler

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 16th December 10am-3pm**, continue upon previous efforts to enhance the park's woodlands by carrying out this historic management technique, which improves woodland bio-diversity and woodland age structure followed by Christmas food & drink to celebrate the end to another great year! If you would like to come along, please email: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.

What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

Ooh it's definitely getting colder, I have finally conceded that thermals are required most mornings now! However, once you get past that initial shock of the cold, the days themselves are beautiful. If like me, you are up and about early, take time to stand and appreciate the misty and incredibly peaceful surroundings of Houghton Hall Park.

You may have noticed that we have been improving the edges by the yew trees which we have now affectionately named yew walk! By widening these borders and improving the soil quality, they will be ready for some spring plants and a very welcome bit of colour. The poor brown yew trees have been removed but will be replaced shortly to complete the uniformity again. And then of course there are the leaves... many of you have commented that it's a big job, please feel free to come and help as I have more than one rake!

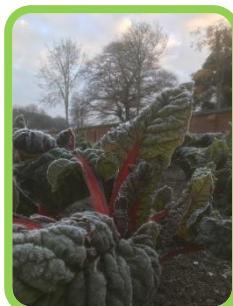
On a slightly more serious note, it's really disappointing to see a large amount of dog fouling in the formal and kitchen gardens. Every day we are finding huge quantities of dog fouling in the formal beds and on the grass verges. There have been so many occasions where I and my colleagues have ended up with it on our gloves, boots and tools. Please do your part to keep the park clean and tidy, it is everyone's own responsibility to be vigilant when walking their dog(s) and to bag and bin any dog fouling – those who don't could be fined, and are acting unfairly to other park users and the local community. We are pleased to say that the majority of our visitors are very responsible, considerate and understand that this helps to keep the park enjoyable for everyone (including themselves). If you see somebody commit a dog fouling offence, please help by sending over the details to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

Kitchen Garden

Things have definitely slowed down now we have hit the cold snap. It is really important not to walk on soil that is frozen or wet as it damages to soil structure which I spend a lot of time digging in organic matter to improve. Therefore, you will only see me working on these beds on fine, dry days. Despite that, the garlic has just begun to show through ready for next year. The garden has looked especially nice with the frost in the mornings.



Kale



Chard



Garlic

Job of the month

Keep collecting your leaves as you will be really glad your home-made compost to enrich your borders. Now is also the time to make plans, decide how you want your garden to look for next year. Take plenty of pictures, browse through seed catalogues, and clean and tidy all your tools and trays.

If you want to add a splash of colour you still have time to add some tulip bulbs to your garden. These are a great way of providing colour when it can all look a little bleak. Try to stagger your flowering time and you will be amazed at how long they last compared to cut flowers.

Plant of the month

You will notice the beautiful racemes of mahonia just starting to burst in the large circular bed in the formal garden. A wonderful splash of vibrant yellow and a great source of nectar for wildlife.

Vegetable of the month

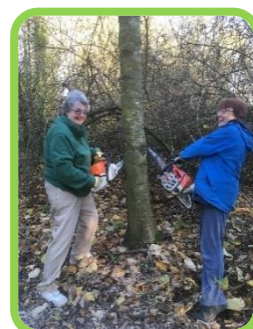
I have one small patch of leeks which I am still harvesting, and they really pack a punch. You have to be careful when harvesting leeks not to put your fork through the flesh. There really is nothing nicer than home grown leeks!



New developments

Thank you all for your positive comments on the remembrance bed, we have had a really positive response and look forward to marking more events in the calendar. We have recently teamed up with All Saints Academy who are providing me with their artistic skills for Christmas. Watch this space with interest!!

I recently joined the most recent conservation task in the park with the Greensand Trust for an afternoon of coppicing in the park. They tackle some wonderful tasks on site which help keep the site looking great. If you fancy seeing how you can become more involved check out the posters around site and on the website. The group of volunteers were extremely welcoming and had a great sense of humour as you can see from the photos!



Another area of interest is by the two lines of yews. We have been busy clearing the leaves, weeding out the rubble and weeds and improving the soil. By increasing the border depth and edging the grass it makes for a feature which will mean we can add some colour leading up to the aster bed.



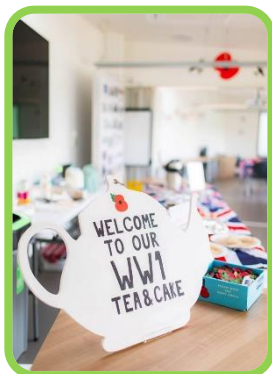
Festive Floral Workshops in the Visitor Centre

As a florist of 20 years, I am running some classes and demonstrations to get you in the mood for Christmas. Please check out the website for more information for the various dates we have available.

I hope to see you out and about and please do stop and have a chat and tell me how I can improve the area for you or if you may have something to offer in the way of skills or time. Until next month!

Happy Gardening, Jenny

WW1 Tea & Cake in November



Thank you to all those who attended our Tea & Cake event in November to mark the centenary of Armistice Day. This event was free to attend and included WW1 cake recipes and favourite teas from just a few of the commonwealth countries who assisted Britain in the first world war. This included Chai tea from India, Peppermint from the Caribbean, Chamomile from France & Italy and of course British tea. All donations went to the Royal British Legion and we are pleased to announce a total of **£241.30** was raised. There was a display of local images & memorabilia from WW1 generously created by a local resident and the Houghton Regis Heritage Society. There

was a crochet-your-own-poppy station, a display of first world war inventions and traditions and WW1 era music to set the scene.



Keep your eye open for our winter visitors *by Mark Hogan*

The leaves are falling off the trees and the grey squirrels are mulching around getting their last bits of food to put in storage for the winter. The birds are constantly at the feeders as the ground gets harder. If you look out into your gardens and put different foods out, you might find unusual visitors to your feeders this time of year like Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Starlings, Blackbirds and even Robins. They all have to eat so if you can put different foods out for them, a bit of scone, some bacon rinds or even a bit of fruit cake nobody else wanted, they will love it.



If you have fruit and berry trees in your gardens, you might notice different birds like Fieldfares, Redwings and even birds like a Bullfinch, which has a bright red belly, black head and black wings and is very beautiful. You might if you're really lucky see a Hawfinch, they love all berries and fruits and if you do see one, try and get a photograph.

It has been a good year for me, birdwatching. I have seen a lot of birds I have seen before, like 2 Kingfishers

together in one picture and a strange looking bird called a Spoonbill at an RSPB reserve. I have also learnt about a Moth which likes the daylight called a Six Burnet Moth, it is beautiful. When it flies, it has red wings and a black body and when it stops, it has a black back and red spots, keep your eyes peeled next year.



Some of the most amazing sights have been in my Mum's garden, watching a Greater Spotted Woodpecker; a Song Thrush washing itself and a huge flock of Long Tailed Tits coming in and feeding on the suet balls. I was even fortunate enough to see a Sparrow hawk swoop in and attempt to take a female blackbird with one grab, it missed but it happened so quickly, it was amazing.

One of the other things that has shocked me this year, is the amount of Red Kites we now have flying over our houses, they are everywhere and if you do see one, whistle to it and see if it looks at you; I did that over my house and it flew back in my direction and looked down at me, which was really cool but slightly scary!

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 too send it to hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or 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

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 16:00pm



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 hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



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LOTTERY FUNDED