



Houghton Hall Park

August 2019 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.

Summer is in full force in the park, there is so much going on, we have a range of activities for children to keep them occupied this August.

What's On



The Storyteller's Garden

When: 7th & 21st August

Time: Two sessions 10.30am to 12pm and 2pm to 3.30pm

Where: Meet at the Kitchen garden to explore the story bed and hear tales from the storyteller then back to the Visitors Centre for crafts.



A great place to live and work.



Forest School

When: Friday 16th August (SEND) then week commencing Monday 19th August

Time: 2pm to 5pm (SEND), other sessions 11am to 2pm

Where: Follow the signs from the Visitors Centre

Branch Out Forest School are holding a number of sessions in the park in August. The first on Friday 16th August is exclusive for SEND children (£10 per child), then there are four more sessions open to all week commencing 19th August (£12 per child).

Contact Rosie at Branch Out to book your place –

branchoutforestschool@gmail.com

Explorer

When: Tuesday 27th August

Time: 1pm to 3pm

Where: Pick up your map and answer sheet from the Visitors Centre

Free Family Fun, encourages map reading and marker finding while being outdoors. The trails will be safari animals and birds.



Butterfly Day



When: Thursday 29th August

Time: 10pm to 2pm

Where: Kitchen and Formal Gardens

Come along to the Kitchen and Formal Gardens and learn about Butterflies!

Giant Board Games

Mini obstacle Course

Face painting

Create a Life Cycle of a butterfly

Butterfly and Caterpillar Quiz

And much more!



Pop Up Crafts

When: Every Friday

Time: 10am to 3.30pm

Where: Visitors Centre Foyer

We still have a space available on Friday 23rd and Friday 30th August, stalls are £10 please contact hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to book.

Dog Festival

When: Sunday 13th October

Time: 11pm to 2pm

Where: Houghton Hall Park by the Visitors Centre



The Dog Festival is back and we are really excited about what we have planned, more details will be in next month's newsletter. We are hoping to have a number of doggy stalls at the Dog Festival, charity doggy stalls will be free of charge, commercial £12, if you are interested please contact us at hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Children's Totem Pole Competition Update

Thank you to everyone who entered we received some brilliant designs! The wood sculptor will be meeting with us over the summer to decide which designs will make it onto the totem pole with the hope that he will start carving in mid October, watch this space for more updates over the coming months.



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 18th, we'll survey the meadows in the morning, and pull ragwort after lunch. Ragwort is a good nectar source for pollinators and the plant of choice for Cinnabar Moth caterpillars, but is pretty invasive and spreads easily so needs controlling in meadows.

Monthly Photography Themes

If you ever take images in the park, even if they're not for our monthly photography themes, we would still love to see them and feature them in our newsletter so please don't forget to show us your snaps from your visit!

We welcome photographers of all abilities and ages to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly themes; **August's theme is: Summer Days in Houghton Hall Park**, we can't wait to see what you capture!

Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk. The images must be taken between 1st – 31st August 2019 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:

http://houghtonhallpark.org/assets/documents/Photography_Theme_TCs-1.pdf

Here are the entries from July's theme: Getting Active in Houghton Hall Park, just a small selection of the many ways you can get active in the park.



Trina Cooke Walking Our Dogs



Trina Cooke Climbing



Helen Beattie 3



Helen Beattie 2



Helen Beattie 1

What's the latest in the gardens?

Formal Garden

The sun, rain and wind has indeed thrown the formal garden into a spin these past couple of weeks. We are now gradually working our way around cutting back some of the straggly growth on the perennials which means they should quickly recover and send out a new spurt of foliage.

Some of the beds have indeed looked spectacular and provided a wonderful show of colour and form.

There have been plenty of bees and butterflies about which is encouraging to see. The formal garden has been planted with wildlife in mind as it has variety and a long season of pollen and nectar rich flowers.

The box hedging is starting to knit together and create a more solid edge to the individual beds.



Kitchen Garden



These months are indeed flying past so quickly, and I cant believe that we are now entering August. The planning through those winter months has made the crop rotations easy to manage and we have harvested a wide range of vegetables for many different groups, volunteers and the café.

We will soon turn our attention to sowing Spring cabbages for next year, as unbelievably they are sown in August to be harvested next April.



We have continued to have sales of our produce at the café when we have the staff to man it and it has been very encouraging to see so many of you support it.

The recent craft fair was an excellent opportunity to see so many regular faces and hear how much you have been enjoying the potatoes!

Below you can see how much our runner beans have grown in just a few weeks and soon we hope to have plenty to share with you.



Job of the month

It may seem a little crazy but now is the time to be thinking about sowing pansies, and even cornflowers and calendula for an early flowering next year.

It is not too late to sow summer lettuces, quick maturing radish and even spring onions.

Remember lettuces are not happy in heat so will prefer a cooler climate so if possible, use the shade of another plant for best results. We have been planting lettuce under the shade of sweetcorn to help filter out the strong rays of the sun. There is such a wide range available now and the decorative shades would not look out of place in a flower bed!

It is often thought that red varieties are less attractive to pests and I can honestly say this has appeared to be the case in our beds.

Two of my favourites is oak leaf Navara and marvel of four seasons (Raymond Blancs favourite too!) As you will see from below, the colours are truly wonderful.

Keep your watering and feeding regime going this month for all your chillies, peppers and tomatoes. You may want to think about thinning some of your tomato leaves off to let the sun ripen the fruits. Keep your watering steady to reduce the skins splitting.



Oak leaf Navara



Marvel of 4 seasons

Plant of the month

Verbena Bonariensis



This is a stunning and dramatic plant to add colour and height to a garden. Wildlife are drawn to it and even when it has finished at the end of the season and left over winter the frost looks amazing on it.

Often described as a short-lived perennial you will find it freely self-seeds but can be easily weeded and controlled. If planted in a mass, they are self-supporting and require very little attention.

As it flowers much later into the season it will take over from the lavender creating a show stopping display. The heads can be used as cut flowers and even dried.

Come and check ours out in the borders of the formal garden

Community Links

This month we began our story tale bed, which is in the kitchen garden, we still have some spaces available for our craft and storytelling activity on Wednesday 7th and 21st August please see the web site for details. A great deal of time and effort from local people



I would like to thank all the regular visitors and walkers that always stop for a chat and say how much they enjoy our gardens. Likewise I would very much like to extend my thanks to our superb band of volunteers who turn up in all weathers to share their precious time to keep Houghton hall park so lovely. It is never too late to join us, pop down and have a chat!

Happy gardening!

Jenny

Summer is here and it is amazing!

By Mark Hogan

Summer is my favourite Season especially when I see all the flowers out and the buzz of insects, bees and dragonflies in the skies around plants like Buddleia, Foxgloves and in the meadows where you see oxy-daisies and Teasels standing up against the beautiful array of flowers.

You can also see a variety of young birds getting to know their new world; young Robins with speckled chests because they are not old enough to have the red that their parents have and goldfinches with dull grey heads waiting for the red to appear which will determine the sex that they will be. Nature is truly amazing at this time of year.



I have been quite busy out walking and taking photographs and one of my favourite places to go is Jordans Mill. It is on the road between Langford and Biggleswade and has been a working Mill since 1840. The gardens there have a beautiful array of flowers, fruits and wildlife; you might see a Vole scuttling along in front of you, a Dunnock sitting on top of the pear tree singing its heart out or even a Squirrel digging up the

bulbs as if nobody else is about. The Cafe has decking above the River Ivel so if your lucky you might see Swans, Geese, a Little Egret or even a Kingfisher zooming past to find his lunch or some food for his young. There is also a delightful meadow which has an array of beautiful flowers and also loads of Banded Demoiselle damselflies and Red Admiral butterflies skipping around. It is worth a visit.



During June I went down to Devon and stayed near Dawlish which is a lovely place to visit. Dawlish has a park dividing the High Street which has a river running down the left hand side with resident Black Swans who have been around since they were introduced in 1990, they are cute and their little Cygnets are even cuter. You may also see a lot of different ducks as they have a small sanctuary alongside the river where the ducks can

meander out and spend the day in the sunshine where people can see them and take pictures.

Otterton Mill is about a twenty minute drive from Dawlish and is well worth a visit. Rather similar to Jordans Mill it is a working Mill but and also has a lovely Cafe where my partner and I had a scrumptious lunch. Our trip to see the Beavers who were supposed to be upstream from the Mill, was not fruitful but we did catch a glimpse of an Otter with a fish in its mouth.



If you have never been to Devon, Torquay on the English Riviera (honest) is worth a visit. It has an interesting harbour, which had some amazing boats moored and an abundance of large jellyfish called Barrell Jelly Fish which for some reason have made their home in the harbour at Torquay. We also visited

Brixham which is on the other side of the Bay, via a passenger boat. Not only was it a picturesque way to cross the trip itself cost just £7.50. The journey across took about 45 minutes, the





sea was nice and calm so the crossing was good. Brixham is a fishing base but it also has a few touristy things like a Huge Pirate Ship at the end of the Harbour and a very life like pirate at the Kiosk where you pay to get in. There are some nice pubs along the sea front, so we sat down and had another cold drink, there was a fish and chip shop next door and people kept coming back with food so we decided we would too, it was really nice sitting in the sun eating a huge Haddock, Chips, Mushy Peas and Gravy (my girlfriend is from up north and apparently that is the best way to have fish and

chips), it was delicious, I have to say.

Other places you could go out for the day include Dartmouth and Greenways, which is a National Trust House nestled in the hillside. Greenways is where Agatha Christie used to spend her Summer Vacation writing all her Murder Mystery Books, with the breathtaking views it is easy to imagine how she was inspired.

Nearer to home we are quite fortunate to have plenty of places well worthy of a visit, including the Houghton Regis Visitor Centre and Rushmere Country Park near Leighton Buzzard (which is great fun for children that love to tree climb). The Marshworth Reservoir and Canal offers a nice walk from the Marsworth end to a pub along the Canal at Bulbourne, the pub sometimes hosts a Barbeque. If you are looking to spend time in the woods you could visit Ashridge which is the other side of Dagnall, or Wendover Woods near Ivinghoe Aston which has a Go Ape activity centre, if you like that sort of thing.

If you have seen a Bird in your garden and your not sure what it is, get in touch with us and we will identify it for you. If you get a picture of it send it to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and if it is good we might even put it up in the Visitor Centre or put it 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 - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm



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