

Houghton Hall Park

September 2024 Newsletter

The Houghton Hall Park Renaissance and Renewal Project is being managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council and was supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.



What a September it has been already! The park team attended the Anglia in Bloom awards in Thetford on Friday 6th September, this was the first year Houghton Regis as a town had entered. Anglia in Bloom is an initiative that aims to improve and care for our local environment, Houghton Hall Park was entered in the Historic Parks and Gardens Category it was also nominated for a special award 'Best Home Grown'. To be nominated for a special award means that the project or scheme is one of a handful of the best in the Anglia region, and winning means it has been judged to be the best of the best!!

Anglia in Bloom judges visited the park on two occasions once as part of the judging of the Houghton Regis 'Large Town' category and then a second time to judge the park. The Houghton Hall Park team and volunteers thoroughly enjoyed showing off all their hard work and what the park has to offer. Read Community Gardener Sue's update to see how we did!

Have you noticed the new interpretation board in front of Houghton Hall? To mark the contribution of the Brandreth family to the life of Houghton Regis from the 17th to the 20th century, the Houghton Regis Heritage Society have installed an information board in the park, setting out the history of the family in the town, together with the family tree. There is a wealth of information on the board so do take a look next time you pass it in the park.



Christmas is coming and we have received a number of enquires as to when we will be launching our ever popular festive workshops and make at home packs, the good news is you can find out by reading our 'What's On' pages!

A great place to live and work.

What's On

Friends of Houghton Hall Park

Macmillan Coffee Morning

When: Thursday 26th September

Time: 10am to 2pm

Cost: A small donation

Join the Friends of Houghton Hall Park in the Kitchen Gardens for a Macmillan Coffee morning.

For a small donation enjoy tea/coffee and scrumptious cake and raise vital funds to support the more than 3 million people in the UK living with cancer.



Romeo and Juliet

When: Sunday 20th October

Time: 11am to 12pm

Cost: £4 each or £10 for a family of 4

Join us at the Visitor's Centre for The Rubbish Shakespeare Company's interpretation of Romeo and Juliet! Described as 'like Horrible Histories but funnier', a joyous, family-friendly comedy.

Book tickets at:

<https://bit.ly/Shakespeare-HoughtonHallPark>

 A poster for a performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' by The Rubbish Shakespeare Company. The poster features a green banner at the top left with 'Central Bedfordshire Libraries' and a purple circle at the top right with 'great lifestyles'. The main text reads 'Romeo and Juliet' in large, stylized letters. Below this, it says 'Houghton Hall Park Sun 20 October 11am'. A circular logo for 'THE RUBBISH SHAKESPEARE COMPANY' features a cartoon character with a large nose and a ruff. The poster also includes a QR code and a URL: 'https://bit.ly/Shakespeare-HoughtonHallPark'.

Central Bedfordshire Libraries

great lifestyles

Enemies. Balconies. Kissing... Sausage Rolls!?!?

ROMEO AND JULIET

**Houghton Hall Park
Sun 20 October 11am**

Three award-winning fools tackle Shakespeare's epic love story with only a box of bargain bin wigs, a flowery dress, and a burst air mattress they found by the bins! Described as 'like Horrible Histories but funnier' (Primary Times), the hilarious Rubbish Shakespeare Company brings you a joyous, family-friendly comedy.

Tickets cost £4 each or £10 for family of 4 and are available on Eventbrite. Click on the QR code or use link below to book <https://bit.ly/Shakespeare-HoughtonHallPark> Places are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.

Halloween Code Breaker Trail

When: Sunday 27th October

Time: 11am to 3pm

Cost: £6 per child

Houghton, the witch's cat is back, and on a mission to find the missing code to discover the final ingredient for his mistresses' magic potion which has been hidden in the park by the naughty Halloween ghost. With the aid of your magical spy glasses help him find the code then come back to the Visitors Centre to claim your prize, make your own potion and have fun with Halloween arts and crafts! There will be a special treat for those in fancy dress!



The trail is suitable for age 3 up, £6 per child (includes trail, potion making and Halloween arts and crafts).

Tickets must be booked in advance; no refunds will be given unless we cancel the event.

houghtonhallpark.org/events/halloween-code-breaker-trail

Buggy Exercise

When: Every Wednesday

Time: 10am – 11am meet outside the Visitors Centre

Cost: Free!

All levels welcome, the sessions consist of a warm-up around the park and then an exercise circuit, older siblings are allowed in the class however they need to be in a pushchair or be able to run around the park.

New parents can get social, get fit and make new friends whilst most importantly - having fun!

Book in advance, using the following link: -

houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-fitness



And finally.....

On Sale 6pm Friday 27th September

FESTIVE WORKSHOPS

	<p>Learn the art of festive wreath making at our evening deluxe workshop.</p> <p>£48</p>	<p>NOV 27</p>
	<p>Collect your festive wreath packs to make at home.</p> <p>£25</p>	<p>NOV 29/30</p>
	<p>Learn the art of making a traditional Christmas table centre at our festive workshop.</p> <p>£35</p>	<p>DEC 15</p>

www.houghtonhallpark.or/events/events

Café Chat

Hello everyone!

Hope you all have enjoyed the summer holidays, and I bet all you parents are relieved they are over! I just wanted to say thank you for keeping us busy throughout the summer holidays through the sun, rain and all the rest of it.

As you know the café is dog friendly and we love seeing the woofers enjoy their doggy sausages! Just a reminder that all dogs should be on a lead in the café area and outside the café by the play areas, if your dog is not on a lead my team will be asking you to put on a lead or leave the café. Thank you for your understanding on this.

My supervisor Emma has been making free seed envelopes that you have all loved! If you keep on at her she will bring in some again ha-ha.

Now we are heading into Autumn/Winter our closing times will be changing, when these do, we will make sure you are all aware by amending the times on google and there will be a post put out on Facebook too.

I hope all the children going back to school have had a lovely first couple of weeks.

Mia, Café Manager



Monthly Photography Themes

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

September's theme is: 'Close up of Leaves in Houghton Hall Park', the leaves are starting to fall and change colour so there is a lot you can do with this theme!

Please send your submissions to:-
hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

The images must be taken between 1st – 30th September 2024 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

August's theme was 'Light & Shade', thank you for all the submissions we have received for this month's theme, they are wonderful, we never tire at seeing the park from different perspectives!

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles
Central Bedfordshire

September's Photography Theme

'Close Up of Leaves' in Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in September
- Some images will be shown on our website, social media platforms 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



Louise Wright
Granddaughter Lily



Julie Card When the
treetops glisten



Julie Card Light on gnarly
tree



Julie Card Lean into the
Light



Julie Card Every teasel had
a silver lining

What's happening in the gardens?

Hello all

It's September and the kitchen gardens are in full harvest mode now. We've finally had some rain after a dry August and this has given the autumn flowers in the formal gardens a much needed boost. Temperatures have dropped last week but hopefully will be back up again this week. We are not ready for autumn just yet!



Over the next few weeks we will be harvesting the remainder of our produce and selling it at the shop on Thursday mornings, along with donating some to our local foodbank. August has been warm and sunny after a dull July, so we have finally been able to see our tomatoes ripen and even a few aubergines. It has been a good year for anything growing in the ground as we continue to harvest our over sized potatoes, beetroot and a really good bean crop. We

do compare our harvests each year and we know the spring was a struggle for crops like strawberries because there just wasn't enough sun. We're also continuing to de-slug everything, those brown cigar shaped ones just keep coming!



We will carry out a proper review later in the autumn and it will help us decide what to grow next year. We are busy collecting seeds as we build a seed bank for next year.



Friday 6th September saw us attend Anglia in Bloom awards in Norfolk. We arrived in sunny Norfolk (after leaving stormy Central Bedfordshire) feeling rather nervous and unsure what to expect. It is the first year that the park and Houghton Regis town have entered this competition. The judges visited us back in July and it has been difficult to speculate how we did. Neil, Hayley and myself were joined by Bob, one of our volunteers at the event. We were thrilled to receive 2 awards, a Gold Award for the park in the category of "Historic Parks and Gardens". The second was a Special Award and we won our category of "Best Grow your Own" for the Kitchen

garden. An all round fantastic surprise and a reflection of how hard our volunteers work to make the gardens look wonderful all year round. Thank you to everyone who has helped, over the spring/summer around 50 different volunteers have helped me in the gardens, all making a contribution to the success of them. Some volunteers were just passing through on the way to different jobs/lives and others have been with us from the start. What a wonderful group of people to work with.



This September we will continue to keep the shop open on Thursdays and sell our produce. We will also be holding a Macmillan Coffee morning on Thursday 26th September from 10-1. As well as selling cakes and coffee for the charity we will be selling our produce and cut flowers. We look forward to seeing you, let's hope the sun shines!

In the meantime see you in the park!

Sue

Community Gardener, sue.atherton@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Community Park Ranger Update

Hello once again from the park, September already! The months are flying by, and the hot weather seems to be done with for the year.

I'm sure many of you have noticed that the wildflower meadow has been cut, it does seem a shame to cut flowers that are still in bloom but they were mostly at the end of their flowering season and going to seed. As our meadow has been established for a good few years it only needs cutting once a year to maintain it. Like pruning it can seem a bit OTT, but it will result in a healthier, more colourful meadow next year. The actual, physical cutting of the plants knock the seeds out of the heads and onto the soil. Cutting it will also expose any bare areas that the seeds will fall onto and germinate. The cuttings are removed otherwise they will feed the soil as they decompose, this will add nutrients to the soil which would benefit the grasses, but the flowers prefer less nutrient rich soils.

Our meadow has a good variety of plants growing in it, with the help of volunteers we managed to survey the whole meadow area before it was cut and identified 40 flowering plants and 6 different grasses!

Even though it has been cut flowers will still grow this time of year one of them being Common Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) which will flower up until November, it has yellow snapdragon like flowers with orange streaks and can grow up to 75cm tall. These particular flowers attract Buff-tailed and White-tailed bumblebees, Common carder bees, Honeybees and a variety of fly species.



A lot of the plants that I included in last months newsletter are still growing in various parts of the park plus a few that weren't so visible last month. Last week I saw a very colourful flower... Tree Mallow (*Malva arborea*). This flower has a bright pink/purple flower head and can grow up to 2m tall. It is more suited to coastal areas and not often seen this far inland. As a mostly coastal plant it has a very high tolerance to salt which it secretes through glands on its leaves giving it a great advantage over inland plants in its more preferred habitat.

Another plant popping up now is Charlock (*Rhaphospermum arvense*) another yellow, four petalled plant that can grow up to 80cm tall. I spotted this one by the newly planted trees by the visitor's centre, also known as Charlock mustard or field mustard.



The leaves of field mustard are edible at the juvenile stage of the plant, usually boiled. In 18th century Dublin, it was sold in the streets during the Great Famine of Ireland, wild mustard was a common famine food, even though it often caused stomach upset. Once the seeds are ground, they produce a kind of mustard.

While walking around the pathways in the park a lot of fruit bearing trees are beginning to produce what will keep our birds alive during the winter months, Whitebeam, High bush Cranberry, Snowball, Rowan, Elder, Hawthorn... to name a few.

Throughout the year we have a conservation group that go out into the park to carry out various tasks every other Sunday, if anyone is interested in being part of our friendly team then don't hesitate in contacting me, I will let you know when our next outing is and what we will be getting up to.

Take care of yourselves and each other, Neil.

Community Park Ranger, Neil.Forder@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Nature Notes

This last week has seen a drop in temperatures. Together with it getting darker earlier in the evenings is a sure reminder autumn not far off. In fact, the autumn equinox begins on Sunday 22nd.

Wildlife will be preparing now for winter, and I've noticed a big increase in the number of birds coming to the garden. The amount of food needed to top up the feeders each morning has also gone up by about fifty percent over the last month. If the cold weather persists, I will put out additional feeders to help them put on weight and fat reserves. Some of this extra feed is down to the gold finches who have been arriving in greater numbers of late. Early mornings and afternoons are the busiest with as many as thirty birds feeding at any one time. There have been signs of some having a late brood



Some of the starlings waiting for me to put breakfast out.



The squabbling at the fat filled block starts

as there have been young birds begging their parents to feed them. Although nowhere as numerous chaffinch numbers are also

up. Starling numbers are also high with fifty or sixty arriving each morning. If I'm late by as little as five minutes in putting the food out, they line up on the rooftops waiting patiently for breakfast. The main draw for them is the fat mix and mealworms. On seeing me some of the braver birds drop down into the apple tree to be first at the fat filled wooden block.

Then as I move away the noisy squabbling starts with a lot of pushing and shoving. A pair of collard doves are spending more time in the garden spending long periods resting in the apple tree, in between feeding on food dropped from the feeders.



Black squirrel rummaging below the bird feeders

Last week a black squirrel arrived in my garden and may well become a regular visitor, as apart from one, I have seen it at least once every day since. It starts by investigating the wooden block I stuff with a fat-peanut butter mix. If empty, it roots around under the feeders with the rich pickings of sunflower heart pieces dropped by the finches feeding above.

Squirrels don't hibernate, although if the weather is bad, they may decide not to venture out every day. Eventually hunger forces them to look for food, so having places they can rely on to provide a meal is very important for them. Black

squirrels are not a different species their colouration is just a mutation from the grey. There are several of these black squirrels in the park so keep an eye out, you may be lucky enough to spot one.

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens



Black squirrel leaping from the apple tree to the fence

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm

Sat – Sun 8am to 5pm



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



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LOTTERY FUNDED