

Houghton Hall Park

October 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.

Last year we asked for your opinions on what to replace the wooden net structure with that was removed from the park for user safety. We received 243 responses to the survey and 89% indicated that they would like a piece of equipment which combined, climbing, balancing, crawling, hanging, sliding, socialising.

We are happy to say that the play structure shown below has been ordered and will hopefully be installed by January 2025.

Not only that, but you also asked for more inclusive play in the park so to sit alongside the accessible equipment we already have there will be a new inclusive roundabout installed in the play area by the visitors' centre!

We received these wonderful photos from The Chiltern School last week, you may remember we donated the old toddler play to the

school for their goats and chickens' enrichment. Cathy Kerr from the school told us it has been up for a little while now and the goats love it. A wonderful team transferred the equipment from the park and a man who worked on the school environment designed and

constructed the finished product with his team. It certainly has the wow factor! We are so pleased it could be recycled for such a good cause.



A great place to live and work.

What's On

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>



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.

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



Halloween Xplorer

When: Tuesday 29th October

Time: 11am to 1pm, last entry 12pm

Cost: Free!

It's that time of year when the Halloween creatures emerge from their hiding places, and Houghton Hall park is reported to be plagued with some strange and unusual characters. Creepy creatures large and small, have been spotted lurking in the woods, meadow and

gardens and we desperately need courageous trackers to locate these otherworldly intruders. Maps of previous spooky sightings will be provided to each ghost hunter to help them complete their mission. With all the creatures found and recorded our intrepid hunters will earn themselves a certificate and sticker. So join us if you dare for a Halloween adventure not to be missed!

Our Halloween Xplorer Trail is perfect for families with children 8 years or under. It provides an opportunity to take part in the Halloween festivities during the day and to explore the natural beauty of Houghton Hall Park safely through a fun outdoor challenge. It's FREE to take part in the challenge.

For more information visit our website: houghtonhallpark.org/events/halloween-xplorer-2



Halloween Storytelling

When: Thursday 31st October

Time: 2pm to 4pm

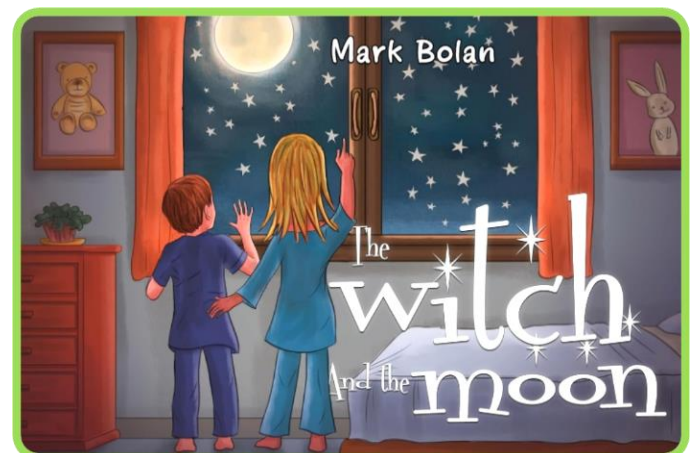
Cost: Free!

Join our volunteer Mark in the Kitchen Gardens on Halloween for readings of his published book 'The Witch and the Moon'.

When a witch and her cat fancy a slice of the moon for tea, they inadvertently cause chaos for the animal kingdom. With the animals lives turned upside down something needs to be done, but what, perhaps the owl can help? Find out how natural order is eventually restored, in this humorous tale and along the way discover why the moon to waxes and wanes.

There will also be FREE colouring-in sheets for the children to enjoy.

No booking required, just turn up!



Pop-Up Stalls

Calling all crafters! Christmas is fast approaching and we'd like to offer you an opportunity to showcase your work with a pop-up stall in the Visitors Centre foyer on a Saturday/Sunday, stalls cost £10 per day. We still have lots of weekends in October, November and December available!

If you are interested, please download/read the terms and conditions and book the date you would like on our website:- houghtonhallpark.org/events/pop-up

Stallholders who have not had a stall at Houghton Hall Park before will need to send a copy of their public liability insurance to hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Festive Workshops

Our festive workshops are selling fast, book early to avoid disappointment!

Festive Workshops 2024



Houghton Hall Park

Festive Table Centre Workshop

Sunday 15th December 10am - 1pm
£35

A beautiful fresh table centre with a wooden keepsake angel.

Spend a few hours making a fresh table arrangement for the big day.

Bring family and friends along and spend some quality time together whilst making a beautiful display.

Must be booked in advance on our website.



Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



Festive Wreaths at Home

Collection 29th & 30th November
10.30am to 11.30am
£25

Make a festive wreath in the comfort of your own home with our fabulous kit put together by the Houghton Hall Park team and our volunteers.

Grab the mince pies and mulled wine and get creative!

Must be ordered on our website.



Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



Deluxe Festive Wreath Workshop

Wednesday 27th November 6pm - 8.30pm
£48

Create a deluxe festive wreath in our masterclass at the Visitors Centre.

All equipment provided along with expert tuition.

A great activity to enjoy with friends to celebrate the season.

Must be booked in advance on our website.



Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



Buggy Exercise

When: Every Wednesday

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

Cost: Free!

Have an hour with you and your little one every Wednesday in the park, improve your fitness, meet other parents and share the joys (or not!) of parenthood.

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!

You could even have a brew in the cafe afterwards!

Book in advance, using the following link: -

houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-fitness



Newsletter Exclusive!

This children's event will be launched on our website and social media in the next couple of weeks, so keep your eye out!



Temporary Diversion

Path resurfacing will be taking place from week commencing Monday 21st October on the **red** route marked on the map.

The works will take place on sections of the path, to protect public safety we ask path users to use an alternative route marked in **yellow** and to keep dogs on leads in the vicinity of the works.

A number of car park spaces in the car park will also be barriered off to accommodate equipment. We apologise for any inconvenience caused and thank you for your cooperation.

For any queries please contact: hph@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Café Chat

Hello everyone!

I hope you're trying to enjoy the changeover to Autumn/Winter, we have seen across the park this month.

September has still been busy for us considering the weather so thank you very much!

In October our operating hours will be changing to:

Monday-Friday: 9:00am till 4:00pm

Saturday & Sunday: 8:00am till 4:30pm

When we have confirmation of the date they will change, we will let you all know.

We will be doing the Halloween Explorer Trail on the 29th October, we would love to see you all come along!

We are also looking forward to seeing you all at the Halloween Code Breaker Trail!

Until next month,

Mia, Café Manager



Monthly Photography Themes

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

October's theme is: 'Moss, Lichen & Fungi in Houghton Hall Park', we've not had this one before so it will be interesting to see what you find. Please send your submissions to:- hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st October 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

September's theme was 'Close Up of Leaves', what wonderful photos of leaves we had submitted, really highlighting what you can see if you look closely!

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

October's Photography Theme

'Moss, Lichen & Fungi' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in October
- Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 31st October
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



What's happening in the gardens?



It's October and the colours in the park are gradually changing. There are a few warm, sunny days in between the rain, which are very welcome. The weather forecast is so changeable, it's difficult to plan the days and we spend a lot of time gazing at the sky trying to decide what's coming next!

September was great fun as we held our Macmillan Coffee morning on the 26th. The wet weather lifted for a few hours and our volunteers worked

hard to make sure the event went without a hitch. We were well supported by our local community and raised over £500 for Macmillan. A huge thank you to all our volunteers and supporters who made the event such a delight and helped us raise so much money. We are planning another cake and coffee morning in the spring and hope to make them a regular event.

Our produce shop will be open for the next 6 weeks whilst we harvest our remaining stocks of carrots, beetroot, salads, cut flowers, celery, potatoes and other root vegetables. The shop will be open on Thursday mornings as usual from 9.30/10am until we sell out.



The next few months will be about clearing the gardens in preparation for next year. It's always a sad time of year and the gaps in the kitchen garden are getting bigger. I've ordered lots of bulbs for the spring so we can look forward to lots of colour in March and April. We are also collecting seeds from our plants so we can sow for next year. We are busy replanting some of the beds, particularly the flower beds outside the railings. They are being planted with spring colour such as tulips, daffodils, wallflowers, polyanthus and pansies. We want to create a display which is really uplifting as you enter the park from the Green.

We are also planning to start repairs on our raised beds. Wooden raised beds are a great way to grow vegetables and flowers, and for 7 years they have done their job well. Now, however the insides are rotting, and the wood is beginning to buckle. The rotting wood is a great habitat for slugs too! So, we will be working on repairing 3 of the beds in the autumn and hope to be working with the Town Council's Grounds Team to do this.

Hopefully we will see some more warm days this month and look out for fungi in the park.

Sue

Community Gardener

sue.atherton@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Community Park Ranger Update

Greetings again from the park, as I'm sure you have noticed autumn is here, leaves are changing colour and falling and it's time to keep the pathways clear, the decaying leaves can become very slippery so to avoid accidents I'll be keeping them leaf free as much as possible although it's a bit like painting the fourth bridge... by the time I get around the park there is a scattering on the ground back where I started! Although the long hot days of summer have gone now and it's getting colder there are some beautiful shades of red, brown and yellow to be seen when standing in the meadow area, particularly looking west.

There are still some plants in flower, mainly yellow and white ones because, just like in early spring when there isn't so much light what pollinators there are still around see those colours better. Adding to the colourful displays from the leaves are berries. If you take the time to stroll around and look at the trees you will notice quite a few different ones, admittedly a good few of them look similar but on closer inspection there are subtle differences in the berries and the trees themselves can help you identify them... the leaves that are still holding on, the shape and colour of the twigs and buds, the height and shape of the trees and bushes all assist in identification.

The berries are vital for the birds getting through the winter and in our park, we have a good selection for them to feast upon, Hawthorn, Rowan, Holly, Spindle, Whitebeam, Highbush Cranberry, Sweet Briar and Black Bryony. Although birds happily munch away on these berries Black Bryony is poisonous for us humans so give them a wide berth, they are actually climbers and grow along the branches of other trees and bushes with vines making it look like they are attached and part of the tree or bush which can be misleading.

Our park plays a big part in the community, giving people a calming place to walk around relieving the stresses of life, not just locals, people come from a fair distance to make the most of our amenities. It serves as an educational resource too, we have schools coming to visit and volunteer on various tasks in the park and gardens and I will, hopefully, be able to offer more supervised talks and walks to schools. I still have conservation Sundays where people can volunteer to put something back into the park carrying out different tasks. At the beginning of this year, with the help of our volunteers we planted a good few fruit bearing tree saplings to provide food for the birds in the years ahead.

You may have noticed that the bench in the south-west corner of the park has been replaced now so people can rest on it while enjoying the view across the meadow towards Houghton Hall.

Take care of yourselves and each other,

Neil.

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



Nature Notes

A couple of weeks ago a neighbour called me over to ask me for advice as bees were making it difficult for him to work on his garden. They turned out to be ground bees. Although these mining bees are solitary they often congregate in the same area, especially if the ground is suitable for them. Ground bees as the name suggests is a generic term for a group of bees that build nests in the ground. Of the 267 types of bees in the UK 70 fall into this category. Similar in size to a worker honeybee, ground bees differ in that they don't build large social nests. The males mate with individual females, whereas with honeybees, the male only mates with the queen. Though in both types of bee the male dies soon after mating. The female, like her honeybee counterpart, does all the work.



Ground bees digging holes ready to lay their eggs



This caterpillar has taken ten days cocoon building so far.



Little progress after a further week

Having mated the female will prepare a nest, digging a hole a few inches deep in the soil where she will lay a single egg. She then collects and deposits pollen as food for the larvae when the egg hatches. This process she will repeat for six or so weeks until she dies. The emerging bees then emerge and continues the cycle. Like honeybees, some overwinter in the soil only emerging in the spring as the weather warms up. Whilst bees can survive the cold, the temperature needs to be around 15 degrees before they can fly. If left alone ground bees are mild mannered and with no nest to defend unlikely to sting. They make a valuable contribution to the eco system in several ways. Like other bees they are excellent pollinators, particularly for early plants in the spring. Because they aren't generalist feeders, they pollinate a wide range of fruit, flower, vegetable plants and trees. Their digging habit also aerates the soil allowing water and nutrients to penetrate deeper into the ground. Their preference is for dryish light soil with little or no vegetation. So, the easiest way to deal with them if they do become a nuisance, is to mulch the ground and grow ground cover plants. This will persuade them to move on, as trying to eradicate large numbers, as in my neighbour's case, will prove difficult.

Recently I have been watching a caterpillar try to construct a cocoon on the door of my

workshop. It's been working away at it very slowly for over a week now without much success. It will be interesting to see if it eventually gets it finished. I also came across a caterpillar in my garden that I've not seen before. It's a Scarce Vapourer and is quite bit west from the area where it is normally found. So, an unexpected visitor to my garden and a good sign my gardening with nature in mind is paying off. It should overwinter as a larva under the eaves of the workshop and hopefully survive to emerge in the spring.

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens



Far from its usual patch a Scarce Vapourer

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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