

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter

Over the winter months we have been preparing the gardens for the first open days, which are in February and it is great to see them coming back to life. We are looking forward to another busy year with lots going on in the park. The new children's play trail will be opening in the spring and our new orchard will be starting to take shape. We also have another packed events and activities schedule, see inside for details.

Winter storms hit the park & gardens



Like most parts of the UK we have been battered by some wild weather over the last few months. Firstly, in October we had St Jude's storm which brought down and damaged a number of trees around the park. The most notable losses, were a mature box elder (*Acer negundo*) and a beautiful mature crab apple, both of which were situated in the pleasure gardens. This was followed by the much more violent storm on the night of the 23rd December. The most dramatic damage was in the rock garden, where the top of a mature sycamore broke off and landed in one of the small ponds. Thankfully it hit the side of the pond so it didn't damage the base, so it still holds water. Most of the other damage was small branches, and it was more the quantity that was quite overwhelming. Over the next few months we will be tidying up the gardens, while in the park, we will be taking a more relaxed approach leaving some of the fallen wood for wildlife habitats. It is always sad to lose trees around the park, but these storms are part of a natural cycle. After the initial shock of losing them comes a realisation that it is an opportunity to plant something new and ultimately that's what gardening is all about!

The Gatton Trust

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New Park Warden started in December!

Exciting news; After 3 months of being without one a new park warden has joined us and is settling in nicely! Kate Thompson came to us from 10 years with the British Wildlife Centre in Lingfield. She has lots of relevant experience including working alongside volunteers and with a happy, enthusiastic outlook is already proving to be an invaluable member of the team.



Kate's time at the British Wildlife Centre has resulted in her rescuing some interesting animals that she now looks after at home. These include a 3 legged Bearded Dragon (pictured), a huge Praying Mantis, and a tame rat that will quite happily sit on her shoulder.

Kate is already bringing some of her animal expertise to the park by planning to put up Owl boxes and Dormouse houses.

Forthcoming Adult Events

Sat 1st February Felt Making

Create a scarf or small rug using this traditional craft technique.

10am – 3pm Cost: £35 per person + additional materials charge (bring a packed lunch)

Sun 2nd February Gardens & Park Open

Park and gardens open all afternoon, bird hide open, free guided tours and free activities for children.

1 – 5 pm

Cost: Adults £4 children free

Sun 9th and Sun 23rd February Snowdrop days

Park and gardens open to view the snowdrops. Light refreshments available

12noon – 4pm

Cost: Adults £4 children free

Sat 15th February

Make your own living willow chair

A day making your own living willow chair, which you can take home, plant in your garden and watch it grow! All tools and materials provided

10am – 4pm (bring a packed lunch)

Cost: £55 per person

Sun 16th February National Gardens Scheme Open Day

11am – 4pm

Cost: Adults £4 children free

Mon 17th – Fri 21st February Snowdrop Week

Park and gardens open to view the snowdrops. Light refreshments available

Open daily from 12noon – 4pm

Cost: Adults £4

Sat 1st March

Scrap Happy!

Recycle your fabric and paper scraps to create new and beautiful pieces.

10am – 3pm Cost: £35 per person (bring a packed lunch)

Sun 2nd March

Gardens & Park Open (see Feb)

Special 2 for 1 offer on entry for members of the Surrey Hills Society.

Sat 15th March

Quiz Night

A highlight of the year! Bring your favourite tittle and join in the fun!

7.30pm. Cost: £10 per head including supper

Sat 29th March Screen Printing

Learn this textile craft technique using your own designs. Please bring some cotton fabric to print on.

10am – 3pm Cost: £35 per person. Extra screens available: £7.50 (bring a packed lunch)

Sun 6th April

Gardens & Park Open (see Feb)

Mon 7th April – Thu 17th April (excluding Sat & Sun)

Tea in the Japanese Garden

Why not treat your friends and family to morning or afternoon tea in our Japanese tea house? Surrounded by nature, enjoy exclusive use of the garden for a cream tea or variety of cakes, tea and coffee. Buggy ride included! Morning & afternoon slots available. Max 6 adults per group. Adults £10 per person. Children £5 each. (£40 min charge). £10 Deposit required to reserve booking

Sun 13th April

Spring Walk around Gatton

A tour around the park and gardens as they spring back into life. Guided by the Landscape/Heritage Officer

2pm

Cost: £8 including tea and cake

Sun 13th April

Garden plant supports

A one day course making plant supports & ornaments from willow with underwoodsman John Waller in the beautiful setting of Gatton Park.

Materials and tools provided.

9.30am – 4.30pm

Cost: Adults £52 (bring a packed lunch)

Mon 21st April

Open Day & Easter Egg Hunt

Explore the gardens looking for clues to find the eggs

See Feb Open Day.

50p per child to join the egg hunt.

Sat 26th April Practical Photography Fun!

Bring your own digital camera, learn tips and techniques for taking good pictures, then take pictures and digitally enhance them using software on iPad or PC (or your own software if you bring a laptop)

10am – 3pm

Cost: £35 per person

(bring a packed lunch)

Would you like to receive mailings about our events and activities? Please send your postal and email address to us and tell us whether you would like information on adult or children's courses, or both.

What a busy time!

The last few months have been very busy for our Education staff and volunteers with lots of different winter activities for families. In the half term holidays we had workshops for children to learn 'All about Owls' and our toddlers enjoyed bringing the story of 'Room on the Broom' to life with activities in the park. If they were feeling brave enough, adults and children faced the dark to hear scary stories in and around Gatton Hall at our Gatton Ghost Stories event (more about this on back page).



Christmas at Gatton



The Christmas season was also extremely busy at Gatton, with lots of events and activities. Children enjoyed a golf buggy ride to visit Santa in our grotto where they had a chat with him and secretly whispered what was on their wish list for Christmas. They then went back up to the hall to make a Christmas decoration and have tea & mince pies!

We also held various workshops throughout the season; creative families learned new skills in making wreaths and stars from willow, decorated with greenery from around the park, and younger children got glittery at our Christmas crafts workshop.

Happy New Year!

We are very excited to be running some new courses for children and adults in 2014. Children can have a go at creating their own story using natural materials to make props at our 'Animation workshop'. For adults, there is fun to be had improving your photographic skills or creating new pieces by recycling fabric and paper scraps at our 'Scrap Happy!' and 'Practical Photography Fun!' workshops.



Forthcoming Children's Events

Sun 2nd February Gardens and Park Open

Park and gardens open all afternoon, bird hide open, free guided tours and free activities for children.
1 - 5pm Cost: Adults £4 Children free

See 'Adults' Events' section for Snowdrop Open Days

Mon 17th February Rockets, Stars & Planets (4 - 7 years)

Crafts and fun activities to learn more about space.
10am - 12noon or 1.30 - 3.30pm
Cost: £6 per child

Wed 19th February Animation workshop (8 - 12 years)

Come up with your own story, create artwork and bring your story to life using animation. 10am - 3pm
Cost £10 per child (incl. DVD)
Bring a packed lunch!

Fri 21st February Toddler Trails and Tales (2 - 4 years)

Enjoy the story of *The Gingerbread Man* and go for a walk around the park to bring it to life.
10 - 11.30am or 1.30 - 3pm
Cost: £6 per child

Sun 2nd March Gardens & Park Open (see Feb)

Special 2 for 1 offer on entry for members of the Surrey Hills Society. Free geo-caching trail for families.

Sun 6th April Gardens & Park Open (see Feb)

Mon 7th April Spring (4 - 7 years)

Arty and crafty activities inspired by Spring.
10am - 12noon or 1.30 - 3.30pm
Cost: £6 per child

Wed 9th April Camp Building (8 years +)

Come and build a camp in the woods with your friends.
1.30 - 4pm Cost: £6 per child

Fri 11th April Toddler Trails and Tales (2 - 4 years)

Enjoy the story of *Jack & the Beanstalk* and go for a walk around the park to bring it to life.
10 - 11.30am or 1.30 - 3pm Cost: £6 per child

Mon 14th April Natural Art (4 - 7 years)

Create some beautiful artwork from natural materials.
10am - 12noon or 1.30 - 3.30pm
Cost: £6 per child

Thurs 17th April Toddler Trails and Tales (2 - 4 years)

Enjoy the story of *Maisy Goes Camping* and go for a walk around the park to bring it to life.
10 - 11.30am or 1.30 - 3pm Cost: £6 per child

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Volunteering at Gatton Park

Volunteers Christmas Party

In mid December we held our Christmas Party for the Volunteers. At least 65 volunteers and staff attended and we received particularly good feedback this year. It's always good fun, and a lovely way to meet new volunteers and catch up with old friends, but this year's spread of home-made food was amazing!

Rick Bewsey - Volunteer Park Assistant

Rick started with us in March this year, after taking early retirement from a job with the Civil Aviation Authority at Gatwick. He was pointed in our direction by the local volunteer centre and has since become a very enthusiastic contributor to Gatton life. He loves being out of doors, and says he really values the days he comes to Gatton; even though he still has a lot on otherwise, he looks forward to coming in, checking the weather forecast and preparing for a day out in all seasons.

Both Rick and his wife enjoy cycling, and this summer they pedalled their way right across France. Their expedition took them from St Malo in Brittany to Caunes Minervois near Carcassonne, following the Canal du Midi from La Rochelle on the West coast to Toulouse. They covered a total of approximately 800 miles, taking three weeks to lap up the French way of life and the stunning countryside.

Rick says he's enjoyed all parts of the volunteering so far, even dredging the lake. He is keenly looking forward to the new plans for the park and seeing how the volunteers will be involved as our various projects go forward.



And of course a massive thank you to everyone for all your passion, enthusiasm and pride for Gatton Park!!



Gatton Ghost Stories 2013

Our Halloween event on Sunday 27th went really well. It managed to be both scary and funny, and thoroughly enjoyed by kids, grownups, volunteers and staff! Lots of time and effort goes into our Halloween event, starting with creating 30 pumpkin lanterns to guide the way through the park to the start of the tour. A huge thank you to the Gatton Community Theatre who kindly volunteered to become spooky story tellers for the evening, and to all the other regular and new volunteers who helped out as vampires, pirates, witches and ghosts.

Current Volunteering opportunities

The volunteers at Gatton make it what it is. If you would like to get involved there are many different ways you can help out.

Garden restoration and maintenance:

Since 1996, the garden restoration volunteers have brought back to life the rock and water garden, the Japanese garden and areas of parkland. These areas need continuing development and maintenance. You don't have to be a gardener to help us but any experience would be useful.

Parkland Management Assistant:

Come and help the Park Warden with the maintenance and development of the park. Work involves hands on woodland and grassland management, habitat creation and surveying.

Estate Tour Guides:

Gatton Park has a rich heritage that we are keen to share with as many people as possible. This opportunity provides you with the chance to develop tours around the park and gardens by using the resources of our recently developed archive. If you have a passion for history and a natural flair for talking to groups, Gatton Park provides a wonderful setting for you to develop your interests. Basic training in how to use the archive and deliver park and garden tours will be given.

Kitchen Garden Maintenance:

An area of kitchen garden has been reinstated by volunteers, for use mainly by the children of the RAA School. You could work in the allotments preparing them for winter or alongside teachers working with children. It would be great if you have any gardening/food growing experience though this is not essential.

Can you help the Education Team?

We need help on a wide range of tasks. These include:

-Office Manager, look after the office when staff are out with school groups. Manning the phone, taking bookings, giving info on events, checking emails

- Helping with or leading groups of children on indoor and outdoor studies and activities

- Administrative help, such as computer work and promotional mailings

- "Blue Peter" volunteers – cutting, sticking, colouring, laminating – to prepare for children's activities

- Helping out at special events or with weekend activities

- Marketing or assisting with fundraising

We are happy for volunteers to come anytime during the week that fits in with your schedule.

If you would like more information on our volunteering opportunities please call or email us. Our contact details are on the front page