

### Welcome to our Spring Newsletter

Welcome to our spring newsletter. After a wet and windy start to the year the sunshine has finally arrived and the gardens are full of life. We have lots of events and activities for adults and children over the coming months and it is a great time to see the park and gardens. See our website for more details.

### Kids Need Mud! New Play Trail in the Pleasure Gardens



As part of our Kids Need Mud project, staff worked with volunteers and special groups to create a children's play trail around the Pleasure Gardens.

Natural materials were used to provide simple structures for children to interact with nature, get muddy and 'go wild'! The features of the trail were built mostly from materials found in the park itself, and the structures are hidden within the landscape, so that the views and vistas across the parkland are not affected.

We worked with groups from the Richmond Fellowship, Colebrook day centre, and all of our excellent volunteer park assistants to get the trail ready for this Spring/Summer.

There are nine different activity areas on the trail, including a see saw, scramble slope, rope bridge, willow tunnels, climbing logs and stepping stones, don't forget to look out for signs of our resident tree fairies, just moved into the area...

This project was kindly sponsored by; The Bellingier Donnay Charitable Trust, Councillor Grant-Duff's Allocation of the Councillors Community Awards and Councillor Newstead's Allocation of the Councillors Community Award

#### The Gatton Trust

Gatton Park,  
Reigate,  
Surrey  
RH2 0TW  
Registered charity: 1101467  
website: [www.gattonpark.com](http://www.gattonpark.com)

#### Park and Gardens

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## Wildlife at Gatton

Our new park warden Kate has been busy in the park this Spring with some ideas to encourage wildlife at Gatton. An Owl box was put up in the Cedar tree in front of the lake (see picture) to encourage nesting. It's aimed at Barn owls who have been seen flying in that area. Breeding season is May - June so fingers crossed....

10 Dormouse boxes have been constructed from wood and will be placed in Temple and Tower Woods as they are pretty undisturbed. They will be attached high up in trees. Dormice are endangered, there haven't been any confirmed sightings at Gatton yet, but as there has been continuous woodland here for sometime the habitat is ideal.

Large pieces of corrugated iron have been put out around the park, as part of a reptile survey Kate and the park volunteers will be doing. These will hopefully attract different species of reptiles especially snakes. As the sun warms up the metal, reptiles sneak underneath to warm up before they go out hunting. They will be checked every two weeks through the summer. It's early days but so far toads have already been spotted, along side some voles who will have hopefully moved on by the time the snakes arrive!

## Main Lake dam repairs

The main lake at Gatton was constructed in the 18th Century as part of the 'Capability' Brown landscape. An area of around 26 acres was excavated and a dam constructed on its southern edge to build up the depth of water. The lake was christened the 'Grand water menagerie' and it was the centrepiece of the Brown design. Over the last few years we have been monitoring this dam and we have become aware that it needs to be brought up to modern standards so, hopefully, it will survive for another 250 years. This work is being carried out by the Charitable Corporation of the Royal Alexandra and Albert School who own the site, though the park team have been involved in the process and will be replanting the dam once the work is complete.

## Forthcoming Adult Events

### Sun 6<sup>th</sup> April 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

### Mon 7<sup>th</sup> April – Thu 17<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> April

#### Garden plant supports

A one day course making plant supports and 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)

Booking essential.

### Sun 13<sup>th</sup> April

#### Spring Walk around Gatton

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

Booking essential.

2pm Cost: £8 (including tea and cake)

### Mon 21<sup>st</sup> April

#### Open Day and Easter Egg Hunt

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

Explore the gardens looking for clues to find the eggs

1 – 5 pm Cost: Adults £4 children free

50p per child to join the egg hunt

### Sat 26<sup>th</sup> 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). Booking essential.

10am – 3pm Cost: £35 per person

(bring a packed lunch)

### Sun 4<sup>th</sup> May 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 18<sup>th</sup> May 'Capability' Brown's Vision for Gatton

A tour of the whole of Gatton Park to learn about Brown's vision for Gatton and how this landscape is managed today. Meet at Wray Lane car park. Good level of fitness required. Booking essential.

1 – 4pm Cost: Adults £10 children £2

(includes tea/cake)

### Tues 27<sup>th</sup> May - Fri 30<sup>th</sup> May 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 1<sup>st</sup> June 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

Traditional games activities including croquet and lawn tennis.

### Sat 14<sup>th</sup> June Basket Making Course

A one day basket making course with underwoodsman John Waller in the beautiful setting of Gatton Park. Materials and tools provided. Booking essential.

10am – 4.30pm Cost: Adults £50

### Sun 6<sup>th</sup> July Gatton Country Fair

A great day out for all the family. Animals, country crafts and demonstrations, children's activities, fun dog show, gardens and grounds open.

12noon – 5pm Cost: Adults £5 children free

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.



## Update on our Frontline Surrey Hills project

As part of our partnership project with Surrey Hills, we welcomed families to our World War Two Family Activity Days at Reigate Fort on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April.

Families borrowed GPS devices to follow a geo-cache trail and explored the area around the fort. Within hidden treasure boxes, they discovered cards telling them about the history of Reigate Fort during World War Two.

As well as this, children enjoyed making code wheels and using them to decode the secret messages hidden within the fort grounds. Prizes of stickers were very popular!

Two soldiers from the 10<sup>th</sup> Essex Living History Group were also on hand to supervise bayonet charging, hand grenade throwing and air rifle shooting!

The two days were a great success with many families taking advantage of the good weather and enjoying a picnic sitting on the banks of the old parade ground.



## Drama at Reigate Fort!

The actors and crew of Gatton Community Theatre are busy preparing for a special production at Reigate Fort this summer. Artistic director Lixi Chivas is leading a team of 45 amateur actors to create an open air performance using the site of Reigate Fort as inspiration as part of the Front Line Surrey Hills project, which has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

'Tales from the Surrey Hills' includes stories of highwaymen and smugglers; soldiers and airmen; and heroes and heroines. It will be performed at Reigate Fort on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June and also on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June, all at 3pm. Bookings in advance at: [www.gattoncommunitytheatre.org.uk/tickets](http://www.gattoncommunitytheatre.org.uk/tickets) or tel: 0333 666 3366. Booking fees apply. Adult £12, child under 16 £6, family ticket (2 adults + 2 children) £30. Telephone for mobility impaired and ticket enquiries only: 07974 017524.

## Forthcoming Children's Events

### Sun 6<sup>th</sup> April 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

### Mon 7<sup>th</sup> April Spring (4 – 7 years)

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

### Wed 9<sup>th</sup> April

#### Camp Building (8 years +)

Come and build a camp in the woods with your friends.

1.30 – 4pm Cost: £6 per child

### Fri 11<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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

### Sun 4<sup>th</sup> May 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

### Mon 26<sup>th</sup> May Fairytale Treasure Hunt

Discover fairytale characters around the park, talk to them and hunt for treasure. In conjunction with Gatton Community Theatre.

1 – 4pm Refreshments available to purchase.

Cost: £6 per child + 1 accompanying adult free, additional adults £6

### Fri 30<sup>th</sup> May Toddler Trails and Tales (2 – 4 years)

Enjoy the story of *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* 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 1<sup>st</sup> June Gardens and Grounds Open

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

Traditional games activities including croquet and lawn tennis.

1 – 5 pm Cost: Adults £4 children free

### Sun 6<sup>th</sup> July Gatton Country Fair

A great day out for all the family.

Animals, country crafts and demonstrations, children's activities, fun dog show, gardens and grounds open.

12noon – 5 pm

Cost: Adults £5 children free

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# Volunteering at Gatton Park



## Volunteer Profile: Mike Thomas

After a career in Financial services as a Business Analyst Mike was itching to get away from an office environment. He says volunteering at Gatton Park was a great match for his love of the outdoors. But his passion for the outdoors goes much further than that and over the past 5 years he's been taking part in ultra-marathons, mostly in the Canadian Arctic.

His adventures have centred on an event called the Yukon Arctic Ultra, claimed to be the coldest and toughest ultra race in the world. Basically it's a non-stop race where participants have the option of travelling on foot, cross-country skis or mountain bike over distances of marathon (26 miles), 100 miles, 300 miles or 430 miles. The race begins with a dog sled race trail across frozen rivers, lakes, hills and forests

during which temperatures can drop to -40 and beyond. Each competitor must be self sufficient and pull a sled that contains food, water, clothing, cooking equipment and emergency items. They must also have a sleeping system to include a bivi bag with sleeping bag, certified down to -40.

Since 2009, Mike has progressively gone through the distance options culminating last year with the 430 miles distance which he completed in just over 10 days, finishing in 4th place.

Mike grins when he says with some under-statement that the event isn't everyone's cup of tea but for him it's not just sense of achievement it's experiencing a pristine wilderness enhanced last year, in the closing stages of the race, with a display of Northern Lights which locals described as the best for years.

I'm sure if you catch him he'll have tales to tell about the trail but he counts himself lucky to have avoided injury and frost-bite so far and he's already put applications in for races in Alaska and Canada next year.



## Volunteers help to build a screen for the new Apiary

On the 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> of April John Waller (an underwoodsman) came to Gatton to work with volunteers and staff to build a rustic screen for an apiary in the new orchard. The first day was cutting materials; stakes and weavers from Gatton Woods, then John showed them how to weave it together to create the fence.

It was a gorgeous day in the sunshine and lots of volunteers turned up to help, which was handy as it's much harder than it looks!

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

## 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**