

Welcome to the Gatton Park Winter newsletter. Winter is well and truly with us, but as we are already thinking about the spring. We start the year with an orchid show on the 8th January which will be closely followed by our snowdrop open days and tours. So don't despair there is plenty to keep you busy through the winter months!

Parterre restoration: the story so far!



Thanks to a mainly dry autumn contractor Will Powell has made great progress on the parterre. As you can see from the picture above the stunning views have been restored and as if by magic the urns that were hidden by the tennis courts have re-appeared. The paths have been laid and metal edges installed so as to bring the original H E Milner design back to life. The grass panels have been top-soiled and seeded and thankfully germinated in the autumn so the grass will be well set to make the most of the spring warmth. We have also installed some steps on the western edge for access to the Monson Road path. The final phase of the restoration will take place in the spring when we will be repairing the urns that run along the southern edge of the parterre. On the community and volunteer side of the project we have taken on another member of staff. Fern Warwick-Ching is our new Volunteer and community project officer and she is already busy working on increasing volunteer numbers and community projects.

The Gatton Trust

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Gatton Orchid Show (Take 2)

On Saturday 8th January between 12.30 -2.30 The Orchid Society of Great Britain will be holding an orchid show at Gatton Park. After the disappointment of having to cancel last year's show due to the snow we thought we would have another go, fortune favours the brave! The show will be taking place in the ballroom of Gatton Hall and in the central section of one of Sir Jeremiah Colman's original Foster Pearson glasshouses. As well as the show there will also be a number of talks on the day in the Colman study along with a screening of the 'Lost Gardens' TV Programme which covered the restoration of the Japanese garden. There will also be tea ,coffee and cake to warm you up after your trip to the glasshouse. Sir Jeremiah Colman, the last private owner of Gatton was fanatical about orchids, both wild species and cultivated varieties. Many cultivated varieties of orchids contained either Gatton or Colman in their name, some of which still survive today. The picture on the left shows Jeremiah in one of many glasshouses he constructed to house his vast collection. It is hoped that this day will prove to be entertaining for all the family while also providing an insight into these fascinating plants.

Snowdrop season once again!

Its nearly that time of year again with February just around the corner so we thought we would give you some dates for your diary. You will be able to view the snowdrops at Gatton on our open days on the 6th February and the 6th March. We will also be open for the National Gardens Scheme on the 20th & 23rd February. All these days will have refreshments available, guided tours and free activities for Children. As if that wasn't enough we will also be running snowdrop tours everyday at 1pm during the week starting 14th February. Last year was our best year for snowdrops with them lasting for nearly 2 months. With the cold weather we have had already we are hoping we are in for another vintage year in 2011!



Forthcoming Adult Events

Sat 8th January Orchid Society of Great Britain Winter Show Orchid show in Gatton Hall & the last remaining glasshouse of Sir Jeremiah Colman. Free talks, tours and film screenings.

12.30-2.30pm. Free, donations welcome.

Sat 5th February Living Willow Structures A practical day learning the basic techniques for creating fences and domes from living willow. You will help to build a structure during the day and also learn about how to maintain a structure in the future.

10am-2pm Cost: £15 per person (bring a packed lunch)

Sun 6th February Gardens and Grounds Open Park and gardens open all afternoon, bird hide open, free guided tours and free activities for children. Come and see the newly restored parterre. 1 – 5pm. Cost: Adults £4, children free

Mon 14th February Snowdrop Week Daily tours around the gardens to see the snowdrops and winter aconites. Tours on Monday to Friday at 1pm. Please book in advance, meet at the Lych Gate of St Andrews Church. Cost: Adults £4

Sun 20th February National Gardens Scheme Open Day

12-4pm Cost: Adults £4 children free

Wed 23rd February National Gardens Scheme Open Day

1-4pm Cost: Adults £4 children free

Sun 6th March Gardens and Grounds Open (See Feb) Special 2 for 1 offer on entry for members of the Surrey Hills Society.

Sat 19th March Quiz Night A highlight of the year! Bring your favourite tippie and join in the fun! 7.30pm. Cost: 7.30 per head inc supper.

Sun 3rd April Gardens and Grounds Open (See Feb)

Sat 16th April Art in the Park Bring your materials and your chair and enjoy a day's drawing or painting in the park There is a classroom available throughout the day for you to use as required.

10am - 4pm Cost: £5 pp (bring a packed lunch)

Sun 17th April Spring Walk around Gatton

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

1pm. Cost: £5 including tea and cake.

For advance booking and more information on all these activities please call us on 01737 649066or visit our website: www.gattonpark.com

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.



Toddler Trails and Tales

“A mouse took a stroll in the deep dark woods...” at Gatton this autumn, as part of our new activities for toddlers. The Gruffalo, The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Stick Man, have been just some of the stories that have been the inspiration for activities for the very young.

We have worked with Stepping Stones, the Children’s Centre for Reigate and Earlswood, to encourage families with small children to enjoy the outdoors and the stories have been the starting point.

The children listen to the story, and then walk around the park doing activities such as making Gruffalo crumble, making their own boat like Max from “Where the Wild Things are” or finding teddies for “Going on a Bear Hunt”.

The sessions have been very popular and after Christmas we will be continuing our outdoor sessions with “Get Out!” with ideas for parents to engage small children in outdoor activities.

Twice the Fun!

In October half term we welcomed a group from East Surrey Twins Club to enjoy an afternoon of activities based on our Japanese Gardens. The children were visiting as part of the Explore and Create project which provided funding to allow us to welcome groups which support families including children who have suffered domestic abuse, young carers and in this case, families with their hands full – multiple births! The children made mini Japanese Gardens, Japanese fish kites and printed with leaves on to fabric. Other groups will have the chance to visit in the spring. The project is supported by The Netherby Trust, Four Winds Trust and Henry Smith Charity.



Taking Play Outdoors

In the autumn term, Louise, our Education Manager, ran a session for play workers who lead after school clubs and holiday schemes. The aim of the session was to give lots of ideas for them to take back to their own settings and give them the confidence to take children outdoors to play and learn. “It’s a little bit strange to ask adults to take part in activities for 4 year olds!”, said Louise “ But they were very good sports and didn’t mind making crowns and wearing the around the park, along with lots of other silly activities I asked them to do”. The sessions were run for Surrey County Council Children’s Services, as part of their training programme.

Forthcoming Children's Events

Sun 6th February Gardens and Grounds Open for families

Sun 6th March Gardens and Grounds Open for families



Sat 29th January Nature’s Calendar (4-7yrs)

Make a calendar for the year ahead with lots of information about the changing natural world through the seasons. 10–12pm Cost:£5

Mon 21st February Tracks in the Snow (4-7 yrs) Learn about animals’ tracks and the signs that they leave behind them. Outdoor games, activities and craft 10-12pm or 1.30-3.30pm. Cost:£5

Thurs 24th February Start Art-Snowdrops and Sunshine

(4-7yrs). Art activities inspired by our gardens at this time of year. Make lots of art to take home. 10-12 noon or 1.30-3.30pm. Cost:£5

Thurs 14th April Green Fingers (4-7yrs) Fun and games about growing plants. Plant your own ‘smelly welly’ herb container to take home.

10-12pm or 1.30-3.30pm Cost: £5

Fri 15th April Toddler Trails (2-4 years). Look out for the big bad fish! Follow the story of a tadpole who can’t go Boing! Activities and art for tiny tots.

10-11.30am. Cost: £5

For more information on all these activities please call us on 01737 649066 or visit our website: www.gattonpark.com

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Volunteering at Gatton Park



Volunteer Profile

Bob & Kath Sims have been enthusiastic and committed volunteers at Gatton right from the start of the park's restoration. They were part of the original team set up by Pat Pay in 1996. Among his many other activities, Bob is also a trustee of the Gatton Trust.

"The achievements of the volunteers have been tremendous. At the time we started work the parkland at Gatton was neglected, with rubble and building materials spilling over from developments at the school. Once the volunteers began clearing the grounds they soon discovered the rock & water gardens, uncovering the buried ponds, paths and other treasures as they went along." An impressive fifteen years on they are still busy, working hard to maintain those gardens they set out to restore to their original glory all that time ago.

When I asked Bob about what keeps him motivated it didn't take him long to make his case. "Quite simply, Gatton is an amazing historic environment. With its breath-taking views, beautiful features and lovely setting, it is a wonderful example of the art of the English landscape garden, and is very much in our hearts." It is, of course, a joint interest for Bob and Kath. As a long time married couple they find their various activities at Gatton a lovely way to spend the day, creating, exploring and discovering as they go.

When I asked Bob if he has any issues, he replied "Yes! the Sunday garden volunteer numbers have dropped off (even before the Big Freeze) and we need some fresh blood to help out. Perhaps you could you spare a few hours to help us maintain our lovely park and gardens?"



Recognition for our volunteer who works the most hours!

Our volunteers are vital to Gatton Park. Your passion and commitment is what keeps us going! The hours volunteers work are already recorded as they are used to get matched funding for the park. I thought I would use this as an opportunity to recognise our most dedicated volunteers. Between now and the summer (may seem a long way off at the moment but it'll be here before we know it!) the volunteer who clocks up the most hours will be awarded a special certificate and prize at the Summer BBQ.

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

Kitchen Garden Maintenance: Up-keep of a large area of allotments, please contact us for more information.

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 flare 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.

Animal Care Assistant:

Help us with the management of the animals that we keep in the park. You will be working with our staff to help with the management of our chickens, pigs & goats. If you have a preference to work with one particular type of animal this can also be facilitated. No experience is required as training will be given, but if you do have experience it would be very useful.

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 in- 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