

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter

Our Park volunteers have been busy clearing areas around the park ready for spring when everywhere will burst back to life. This has meant quite a few bonfires which is a firm favourite of most of our park volunteers particularly now the colder weather has set in!



Snowdrops

At Gatton Park the whole month of February is dedicated to our snowdrops! Throughout February we have several open days to encourage visitors to come and experience the spectacular snowdrop displays (details in the event listings on page 2). At Gatton the double snowdrop is most prevalent and the best place to see them is around the Rock Garden.

Gatton's snowdrops have spread around the gardens since Victorian times to give the display seen now. With the help of our volunteers each year we increase the area covered by the bulbs by lifting and splitting them.

As well as the white carpets created by the snowdrops we also have the bright yellow winter aconites which bring a touch of warmth and colour to the cold winter days. Make sure you set some time aside to visit!



The Gatton Trust

Gatton Park,
Reigate,
Surrey
RH2 0TW
Registered charity: 1101467
website: www.gattonpark.com

Park and Gardens

Tel: 01737 649068
email: landscapeofficer@gatton-park.org.uk

Education

Tel: 01737 649066
Fax: 01737 649067
email: education@gatton-park.org.uk

Barn Owl Update

We are very excited that a barn owl has visited the barn owl box erected last year by the Park Warden! In November, Landscape Officer Glyn and Park Warden Kate checked the box and found a barn owl pellet. The parts of barn owl's prey that can't be digested, for example bones and hair, are regurgitated to form the pellet. Barn owls usually produce between 1-2 pellets every 24 hours.

Pellets can be dissected and are useful for looking at the diet of a bird and prey remains can be identified. We dissected the pellet found in the box and discovered an assortment of bones as well as a water shrew skull, field vole skull and common shrew lower jaw. If you find an owl pellet please be careful when handling and ensure you wash your hands.

At the moment, the barn owls have still not taken up residence in the box, but if they decide to nest in there this year then hopefully we will have more pellets to dissect. This will be a useful way for us to see what the barn owls are eating and potentially what animals we have in the park, although the barn owls will hunt outside the park as well. Looking at owl pellets is one way to gain information about small mammal populations. However, to obtain a more accurate picture of the small mammal populations at Gatton Park we have just received a loan from Surrey Wildlife Trust of 20 Longworth traps. Kate will be setting them up across the park and they will be regularly checked throughout the day. Hopefully we will be able to update you with a list of species for the spring newsletter!



Sheep Flock

Our sheep flock has now increased to 38 and they are certainly doing a brilliant job grazing the park. In the picture our resident 'shepherdess' Kate, the Park Warden, and the rest of the team carefully herd the flock so they are able to graze different sections of the park.

Forthcoming Adult Events

Sat 17th January Living Willow Sculpture

Learn how to make living willow sculptures. The same techniques are used for tunnels, domes and fences 10am – 4pm Cost: £20 per person (bring a packed lunch)

Sat 14th March Quiz Night

A highlight of the year! Bring your favourite tippie and join in the fun! 7.30pm Cost: £10 per head (including supper)

Sun 1st February Gardens and Grounds Open

Enjoy a walk around the park, free activities available for children. 1pm – 5pm Adults £4 Children free

Sun 8th and 22nd February Snowdrop Day

Park and garden open to view the snowdrops. 12-4pm Adults £4 Children free

Sunday 15th February National Gardens Scheme Open Day 11am - 4pm
Adults £4 Children free
Soup and roll lunch available to purchase

Monday 16th – Friday 120th February Snowdrop Week

Park and gardens open to view the snowdrops 12 noon – 4pm Adults £4 Children free

Sunday 1st March Gardens and Park Open

Special 2 for 1 offer on entry for members of the Surrey Hills Society. Free geocaching trail for families. 1pm - 5pm Adults £4 Children free

Sun 5th April Gardens and Grounds Open

Enjoy a walk around the park, free activities available for children. 1pm – 5pm Adults £4 Children free

Tues 7th April – Friday 10th April

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

Fri 17th 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 £55 (Including light lunch)

Sun 19th 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)

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

News from the Education Team



During November the education team were kept very busy with the second phase of the orchard project. After all the hard work raising funds and then planting the fruit trees, it was great that the orchard could finally be used for education purposes.

An artist, Chas, was on site for several days to transform a basic pear structure using willow weaving techniques into a great art piece which has taken pride of place in our orchard. Local school children took part in willow weaving on the pear and also making flower structures. As well as working with the artist, pupils also took part in a variety of orchard and apple related activities, one student summed up the day *"I enjoyed the seed Olympics the most....I also enjoyed the willow weaving and making apples. I thought the activity was good fun."*

Whilst another pupil enjoyed the classroom activities; *"I think the best activity was the apple mache because we got sticky and gluey and it was fun."*

Local families were also able to enjoy our orchard as part of events run during half term. We teamed up with Merstham Playlink to support families of greater need, to enjoy apple games and art.

Fundraising is very important and a constant priority for Gatton Park. For all of our projects we look for those willing to donate funds so if you would be interested in supporting future projects please get in touch. Our Orchard project could not have been completed with the generous donations from several funders. Thank you to the following:

- The Community Foundation for Surrey from the Dancer Fund
- The Shanly Foundation
- Councillor Kelly (Reigate and Banstead BC)
- Councillor Gardener (Surrey CC)
- Councillor Newstead (Reigate & Banstead BC)
- The Netherby Trust
- Sutton and East Surrey Water
- Kimberly-Clark
- The Wates Family Enterprise Trust



Forthcoming Children's Events

Mon 16th February Kite-making (8+ years)

Make a variety of kites to take home. 10am – 2pm Cost: £10 per child (bring a packed lunch)

Wed 19th February Tracks and Signs (4 - 7 years)

Use your detective skills to find clues about the animals of Gatton Park. 10am – 12noon or 1.30 – 3.30pm Cost: £7 per child

Fri 20th February Toddler Trails and Tales (2 – 4 years)

Enjoy the story of *Where the Wild Things Are* and go for a walk around the park to bring it to life. 10 – 11.30am or 1.30 – 3pm Cost: £7 per child

Mon 30th March Get Growing! (4 – 7 years)

Fun gardening projects for youngsters.

10am – 12noon or 1.30 – 3.30pm Cost: £7 per child

Mon 6th April Easter Egg Hunt

Explore the gardens looking for clues to find the eggs.

1 – 5 pm Cost: Adults £4 children free entry, £1 per child to join the egg hunt. No booking required

Wed 8th April Fire! Fire! Drama workshop (8+ years)

Fun drama activities to find out about the fire at Gatton Hall.

10am – 2pm Cost: £10 per child (bring a packed lunch)

Fri 10th 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: £7 per child

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Volunteering at Gatton Park

Happy New Year!

We have another busy year in store for 2015 with lots of projects planned for the park and gardens. First of all we will be completing the work to the main lake dam and banks. Where the dam has been built up we will be replanting some trees to screen the park from the A23, and this will be done using a



variety of native species. We will then be repairing the paths and banks around the back of the lake, which will mean that you can access this area throughout the year. Next we are hoping to do a joint project with the National Trust to open some of the views across the whole park and improve interpretation. This project will build on the Discover Gatton

Project that was completed in 2007. We also hope to reintroduce chickens and bees to the park this year. They are always really popular with the volunteers and public so it will be great to have them back.

Social Media

Gatton Park is on social media so if you don't follow us on facebook and twitter then please do—especially if you are keen on pictures of sheep!

www.twitter.com/gattonpark

www.facebook.com/pages/Gatton-Park/113936175292499



Christmas Party

The Volunteer Christmas party took place on Sunday 14th December with around 40 volunteers gathering together to enjoy a delicious buffet spread. It was a lovely way to finish the year and a chance to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers who work so hard throughout the year.

Santa's Grotto

Father Christmas stopped by Gatton Park again this year on 30th November and 7th December. With around 130 children having the opportunity to visit Santa and for those that avoided the 'naughty' list a present was received. We also held our sold-out Christmas decoration workshops with the chance to make decorations using natural materials from the park and the very popular Gruffalo's Child toddlers session.

A big thank you to all the volunteers that helped make these events such a success!



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 & Maintenance:

Since 1996, the garden restoration volunteers have brought back to life the rock and water garden, the Japanese garden and other 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 management of the woodland and grassland, 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, although 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