

HUGHENDEN NEWS

INCLUDING BRYANTS BOTTOM & CRYERS HILL

SPRING 2015

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What a Girth!

Here at Hughenden we marked the start of National Tree Week by declaring that our 300 year old horse-chestnut, which stands in Hughenden parkland, is the largest horse-chestnut in the UK. This beautiful horse-chestnut has a girth measurement of 7.33 meters, and it's this enormous girth which clinched its Champion Tree status on the National Tree Register. Little did we realise the coverage we would get over this claim. BBC Breakfast and dinner time news, ITV dinner time news. Four of the national papers gave us full page spreads, and all of the national papers gave the full story on the web pages/sites. We were also on most of the forestry/woodland web sites, radio stations and who know where else.

Steve Kirkpatrick, National Trust Estate Ranger, said "All of this came about from my mum giving me a book about ancient trees and their girths. As I was reading the book it talked about oaks, sweet -chestnuts and yews saying their sheer size 15m and age 1000 years that they get to, but nothing on horse-chestnuts. So I thought I'd give the National Tree Register a call and we might get county champion. Much to my surprise they said they would have to come out and measure. It is bigger than the present UK champion, by 13cm. And with the help of our press office it just went viral from there."

Steve Kirkpatrick - Ranger, Hughenden & West Wycombe 077746 49001



Senior Citizen's Party – Saturday, 20 June

All Senior Citizens and their partners (whether or not they qualify for that status) are warmly invited to our annual event when you will enjoy a wonderful buffet and entertainment and it's all free! So, please make a note in your diary to join us on Saturday, 20 June in the Village Hall commencing 5 pm.

As we had received such positive feedback from last year's party, I am delighted to say that the Lamp House singers will be entertaining us once again. The close harmony ensemble of 10 young ladies who have a passion for singing will sing lots of your favourite songs, including some from West End musicals.

Please respond to the Senior Citizens' Party Invitation when it drops through your letter box in the coming weeks and let your Road Rep or me know if you wish to attend by completing the reply slip at the end of the invitation, giving your name, address, phone number and whether or not you require transport.

I look forward to seeing you all at this very special event.

Hughenden Manor's New Car Park

Hughenden Manor, and its immediate surrounding estate, was acquired by the National Trust in 1947, with later acquisitions through the 1980's and 1990's bringing it to its current size of circa 700 acres. Throughout this time it has been opened as a museum to Benjamin Disraeli with increasing opening hours and times as the popularity of the property, and the National Trust has grown. The property is now open 363 days each year. The National Trust is a registered charity, established for the permanent preservation of places of historic interest or natural beauty. It is not government funded and relies on the support of members to fund its vital conservation work.

Over the last 5 years the popularity of Hughenden as a visitor attraction has grown exponentially, with approximately 3 times as many people visiting each year in 2014, than in 2009. This is in large part a result of the continued improvements and investments in the property, including opening additional spaces within the manor and providing additional interest within the gardens and parkland, among many others. The very good thing about this situation is that our employment of local people has almost doubled, as well as the associated economic benefits that a large visitor attraction has on local contractors and service providers etc. Sadly this growth also has a downside as the number one, and persistently heard complaint, was about the car park, with many visitors being turned away on a regular basis. The old woodland car park was introduced in the late 1980's and was never intended to cope with the kind of visitor numbers we now receive, so an investment was required. The restrictions of the site, both topographical and those imposed by the planning authority, meant that we had only one viable option at a cost of approximately £500k.

The introduction of the new car park has forced us to reflect on the current usage of our car park and in particular the free countryside access that was historically provided. Although the car park was free at the point of use, the reality is that the whole site has constantly received investment to maintain it and so in effect that free parking has been subsidised by National Trust members, many of whom increasingly found that they could not get in. With an increase in demand for spaces, some difficult decisions needed to be taken. It is for these reasons, that we are now checking members cards at the point of entry and asking non-members to pay an admission charge.