

**THE HIGGINS ART  
GALLERY AND  
MUSEUM, BEDFORD**

# WHAT'S ON

April to September 2026



Detail from 'Orlando - His Silver Wedding' by Kathleen Hale  
© The Estate of Kathleen Hale



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ENGLAND

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## About The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford

We are a Bedford Borough Council cultural service that showcases wonderful and varied collections of fine and decorative arts and changing exhibitions drawn from the nationally significant collection of British watercolours, drawings and prints. Displays of archaeology, social history and ethnography demonstrate how Bedfordshire has developed over time. These collections inspire a programme of temporary exhibitions, active learning and events.

### **In our permanent collection spaces you can:**

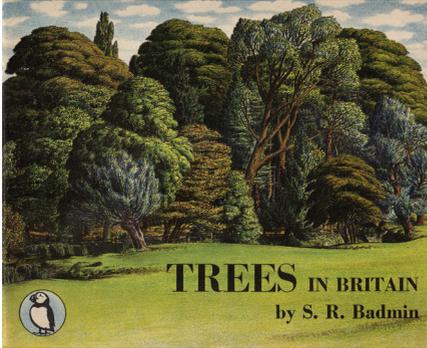
- tour the 1840s house built by the Higgins family next to their brewery. Uncover family stories and Cecil Higgins' collection of internationally important glass and ceramics
- explore the biggest collection of painted furniture created by William Burges, the leading Gothic Revival architect and designer of the 1800s
- admire the decorative artwork and techniques of the most influential designers from over four centuries including fine glassware, textiles, enamels and metalwork
- study the Edward Bawden archive, the collection of one of the most influential artists of his generation. Discover the work of this versatile artist in changing exhibitions
- uncover the geology of Bedfordshire and discover how people from the Stone Age to Medieval times lived in and shaped the landscape we see today
- follow the development of the local area through agriculture, engineering and the brickworks, airships at Cardington, the Second World War and technological advances
- enjoy changing displays about local people who have influenced the story of Bedfordshire
- take a glimpse into the world of The Collectors and cases of natural history, ethnographic and archaeological items from near and far.

For the latest information about temporary exhibitions and events visit: [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk)

# EXHIBITIONS

## Noel Carrington: Nothing Need Be Ugly

Continues until 2 September – extended with additional content  
Wixamtree and Connections Gallery – Free Entry

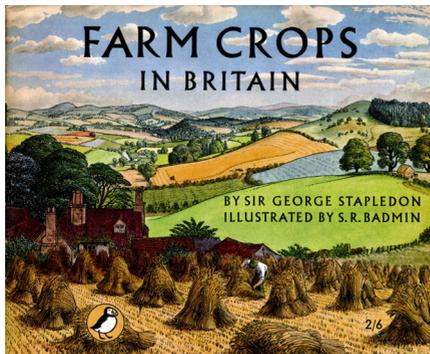


Trees in Britain, 1943 by Stanley Badmin.  
Reproduced with kind permission of the estate  
of Mrs R Badmin

Curated by writer and publisher Joe Pearson, this exhibition tells the story of publishing's unsung hero Noel Carrington (1895–1989). Schooled in Bedford with his sister Dora, Noel Carrington became one of the most influential figures in 20th century design. Through the Puffin

Picture Books and Country Life magazine he commissioned, edited and published some of Britain's most loved children's picture books. He saw the genius in artists such as Kathleen Hale, publishing books about Orlando the Marmalade Cat and championing emerging artists such as Hilary Stebbing. With Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden and Mervyn Peake he

commissioned books such as 'High Street', 'Life in an English Village' and 'Captain Slaughterboard'. Through beloved children's books, forgotten gems and original artwork this exhibition will take Noel Carrington out of the footnotes and into the spotlight.



Farm Crops in Britain, 1955 by Stanley Badmin.  
Reproduced with kind permission of the estate of  
Mrs R Badmin.

## Noel Carrington Exhibition Tours

Friday 24 April 12–12.30pm and Friday 3 July 11.30am–12pm

Tickets £3.95 per person, concessions £3.35

Booking Essential

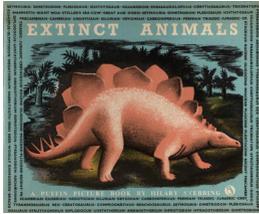
Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art for a half hour tour of some of the highlights of the exhibition.

## EXHIBITION TALKS

### Noel Carrington and his Artists

Friday 8 May 2pm–3pm

Tickets £7.75 per person, conc £6.20 Booking Essential



*Extinct Animals*, 1946 by Hilary Stebbing © Hilary Stebbing Estate

Join exhibition curator, Joe Pearson, to learn more about the artists Carrington worked with, including Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden, Stanley Roy Badmin, Enid Marx, Hilary Stebbing and Suzanne Einzig.

### Marmalade Cats & Faithful Hens

### Kathleen Hale & Noel Carrington

Friday 10 July 11.30am–12.30pm

Tickets £7.75 per person, concessions £6.20

Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, Victoria Partridge, for this marmalade cat-filled talk about the wonderful art of Kathleen Hale.



*Orlando A Trip Abroad*, 1939  
by Kathleen Hale © The Estate  
of Kathleen Hale

To book places on exhibition tours and workshops please call the Box Office on 01234 718044 (open Weds – Sat 10am–4pm) or go to the website, [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online).

## Edward Bowden: Snails for All

Opens 23 May 2026

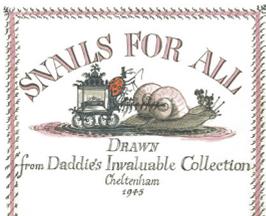
Edward Bowden Gallery – Free Entry

In 1945, after returning from his duties as a War Artist in the Middle East, Edward Bowden wrote and illustrated a book about snails for his two young children called 'Snails for All'. In 2025 The Higgins Bedford was gifted this amazing book for The Edward Bowden Archive.



*The Giant Tortoise*, 1945 by Edward Bowden  
© The Estate of Edward Bowden

To celebrate this new acquisition, the exhibition will display each page of the book alongside other works from the collection. There will also be artwork inspired by the book by children from Putnoe Primary School, made in collaboration with local artist Philippa McDonald from Creative Days.



*Snails For All* by Edward Bowden  
© The Estate of Edward Bowden

'Snails for All' is no ordinary book. Instead of domestic garden snails, the seven species included are fantastical beasts that share one thing in common: they can't be found. There is the Giant Tortoise Snail of Borneo, so giant that it pushes down trees as it moves, the Lovelies Snail who frequents mausoleums and 'crawls over the bones of girls who have died of love' and the undiscovered Heartsease Snail, whose shell is encrusted with precious stones.

You will also be able to buy your own 'Snails for All' book, it is being published for the first time with an accompanying essay by design, architecture and art historian Alan Powers. The book, published by No Pattern Ltd, will be available to buy from The Higgins Bedford shop.

## Snails for All Exhibition Tour

Friday 26 June, 11.30am–12pm Tickets £3.95 per person, concessions £3.35 – Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art for a half hour tour of some of the highlights of the exhibition.

## Edward Bawden Archive Session

Friday 17 April and Thursday 16 July, 2pm–3.30pm

Tickets £14.60 per person, concessions £11.60

Booking Essential

Hidden in secret drawers inside the Edward Bawden



*The Blue Tractor, Saffron Walden, 1962 by Edward Bawden*  
© The Estate of Edward Bawden

Gallery are hundreds of prints, drawings and ephemera. Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art for a delve through some of them. The session is a perfect opportunity to see well known works, as well as pieces that have never been on display before.

## Children's Art Competition and Exhibition

20 June to 4 October 2026

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry

The Children's Art Competition will feature more than 100 pieces of artwork created by pupils from schools across Bedford Borough. The children aged 4 to 18 have created their artwork at workshops with professional artists visiting their schools. The theme for the 2026 exhibition is 'Aspire: Nurturing Potential',

based on their aspirations, goals, dreams, hopes and what they want to be or do in life. This may be looking ahead to the year before they go to secondary school, when they leave school, or even later in life. The competition and exhibition are delivered by The Harpur Trust and The Higgins Bedford. Further information please see [www.harpur-art-competition.org.uk](http://www.harpur-art-competition.org.uk)



HARPUR  
TRUST



# DISPLAYS

## Exploring Bedfordshire's Kilns: An Industry Revealed

28 April to 4 October 2026

Outside Settlement Gallery – Free Entry



Excavation of kiln at Sutton near Potton, Bedfordshire © Albion Archaeology

In 2025, Albion Archaeology, part of Central Bedfordshire Council, unearthed a remarkably well preserved Late Medieval kiln under the playing field of Sutton V. A. Primary School, near Potton. Excavating the Sutton Kiln revealed the closing of a substantial

pottery production centre in Bedfordshire, with over 30,000 pieces of pottery and 500kg of tiles recovered by the archaeologists – most of it washed by volunteers from The Higgins Bedford.

A new display, in collaboration with Albion Archaeology, explores this discovery, alongside other kilns found near Potton and in Bedford itself.

Come and see what this kiln looked like in its day, as well

as what kind of pottery was being made in Late Medieval Bedfordshire, and how the archaeologists saved this piece of Bedfordshire's heritage. This was a community-wide project, the display will include contributions from Bedford Young Archaeologists' Club, Sutton V.A. Primary School and volunteers from The Higgins Bedford.



Volunteers washing finds from kiln at Sutton © Albion Archaeology

## Archaeology Events

9 April: Reconstructing the Past: Clay Pot Making workshop  
1.30pm–3.30pm, Free, Drop in

Suitable for children aged 5 plus and adults

You can get involved in the new display opening in April and contribute to a reconstruction model of the kiln. Come and join this free drop-in session to make a small clay pot that will feature in the display. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Please be aware that space is limited and there may be a wait to start.

## 2026 Festival of Archaeology

The annual Council for British Archaeology's Festival of Archaeology is being held across Britain from 18 July to 2 August. Two events are taking place at The Higgins Bedford:

### 25 July: Bedford Castle Archaeology talk

11.15am–12.15pm, plus an optional  
30-minute walk outside in the Castle Gardens  
Tickets £7.75 per person, concessions £6.20  
Booking Essential

Explore the archaeology of Bedford Castle and how it has informed what we understand about the medieval fortress that once dominated the town.



### 1 August: Kiln Pottery workshop

12–3.30pm, Free, Drop in

Join us for a workshop making tiles with clay and handling some of the pottery artefacts from the kiln excavations.

To book places on exhibition tours and workshops please call the Box Office on 01234 718044 (open Weds – Sat 10am–4pm) or go to the website, [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online).

## George, A Windrush Boy

1 May to 1 November 2026

Dressing Room Display in The Higgins House – Free Entry



Gilroy Gregory at Bedford Central Library for author event, 2025  
© Gilroy Gregory

This display is inspired by a historical novel, *George (the teenage years)*, which tells the story of an 11-year-old Windrush boy who came to England from Jamaica and lived in South London during the 1960s and 1970s.

The author, Gilroy Gregory and his daughter (the artist) tell the story, with illustrations, of this black immigrant boy. The display is a glimpse into the lives of these

unknown British children who came with their parents from the colonies to help in the rebuilding of Britain after World War 2. These children are a lost generation (to the government and the British public). In more recent times some have been mistakenly identified and forcibly removed as illegal immigrants; others have lost their jobs, houses and healthcare. The exhibits are all a connected part of George's story and experience.

## Cultural Roots Sound System Display

March to December 2026

Somewhere in England Gallery

Back by popular demand, Cultural Roots Sound System will be returning in a new location to our Somewhere in England gallery. This display explores the formation of the Sound System

culture as the community settled from the Caribbean in Bedford through the 1950s - '70s, as well as celebrating the achievements of prominent people in the community.



Patrick and Carlton of Cultural Roots Sound System, 2024  
© Lydia McDonald

## Marston Vale Line 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

19 May to 7 June 2026

Higgins Foyer – Free Entry

Join us for a display celebrating 180 years of the Marston Vale Line, the first railway line opened in Bedfordshire. This display will be curated by the Friends of Ridgmont Station volunteers, sharing key milestones and stories for the Marston Vale Line over the decades. Join us for our Reminiscence session on 21 May to share your own memories of the railway.



Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre  
on the Marston Vale Line  
© Suzanne Scott

## Celebrating 150 years of Wells and Co

1 July 2026 to April 2027



Horne Lane Brewery © Wells & Co

Somewhere in  
England Foyer, First Floor  
Free Entry

Founded in 1876 by Charles Wells, the business began at Horne Lane Brewery, brewing beers and growing a thriving pub

estate. In 2019, it moved to Brewpoint and rebranded as Wells & Co., marking an exciting new chapter. Find out more about their 150 year journey.



## Stamp Collecting Posters - The Hobby of Kings by Bedford Philatelic Society

Continues until October 2026,  
Staircase Display

Since the first stamp, the Penny Black, people young and old have been collecting these small sticky squares of paper. This display of stamp and postal-related posters from the Bedford Philatelic Society collection has been curated by Richard Hart. It shares a broad range of significant postal themed material for all ages to enjoy.



# EXHIBITION AND DISPLAYS ENDING SOON

## Ukrainian Folk Art and Heritage Exhibition

Continues until 19 April 2026 – Free Entry



Map of Ukraine embroidered  
for the Bunyan Basement  
exhibition 2024 © Daria Bilan

Outside Settlement Gallery, Collectors  
Gallery and Dressing Room

Join us for an exhibition of beautiful,  
colourful, regional antique heritage  
items associated with Ukraine, curated  
by Daria Bilan of the Ukrainian Culture  
Club. It showcases costume and textiles,

artwork, photography and historic folklore themed items.  
Enjoy the Easter traditions and Pysanky egg trail around  
the museum. Check the website for details of our ‘Meet the  
curator’ events and workshops.

## Edward Bawden Printmaker Exhibition

Continues until 10 May 2026

Edward Bawden Gallery – Free Entry

Edward Bawden made prints in several  
different mediums but is best known for  
his linocuts. From youthful experiments  
on his bedsit floor to his monumental  
linocuts of the 1960s, Bawden made  
the ‘humble’ medium his own, earning the title of Master  
of the Linocut. This exhibition explores his skill and process  
through a selection of prints from the archive. Newly  
acquired lino blocks, gifted by the family, are on display  
for the first time.



*The Royal Pavilion, Brighton 1956*  
by Edward Bawden © The Estate of  
Edward Bawden

## Edward Bawden Printmaker Exhibition Tour

Friday 1 May 11.30am–12pm

Tickets £3.95 per person, concessions £3.35

Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art for a half hour  
tour of some of the highlights of the exhibition.

## Stanny's Stus: Images of Bedford Physical Training College

Continues until 31 May 2026

Sir William Harpur Gallery

Free Entry

'Stanny's Stus': A Glimpse into Women's Sporting and Social History. In 1903, Margaret

Stansfeld founded the Bedford Physical Training College, an all-female institution located on Lansdowne Road. Locally, its students and staff were affectionately known as 'Stanny's Stus.' Many of them were enthusiastic photographers who captured their everyday experiences, documenting aspects of sport, leisure and teaching in Bedfordshire. These photographs offer valuable insights into the social and sporting lives of women in the early 20th century. Thanks to recent digitisation efforts, these historic images, part of the Bedford Physical Education Archive, are now being exhibited publicly for the first time outside of their home at the University of Bedfordshire.



Rehearsing for the Festival of Youth in Sidney Road, 1937 © BPEOSA Collection

## Stanny's Stus Exhibition Tours

22 April 11.30am–12 noon and 13 May 2.30pm–3pm

Tickets £3.95 per person, concessions £3.35

Booking Essential

Join guest Curators Stephanie Daniels and Anita Tedder for a tour of some of the highlights of the exhibition.



Women's Auxiliary Corp, formed during WW2, training on the River Ouse © Keith Jackson

## Bedfordshire Police: A History

Continues until 21 June 2026

Somewhere in England Foyer, First Floor

Free Entry

Discover the history of our local Bedfordshire Police forces, curated by the Bedfordshire Police Historical and

Museum Society. The society is run by volunteers who carry out research and maintain a display at Bedfordshire Police Headquarters. The display highlights objects and their stories collected over the decades.

# EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS COMING SOON

## Rhyme and Reason Exhibition

Opens 25 September 2026

Wixamtree and Connections Gallery – Free Entry



*Frontispiece for Venus and Tannhauser,*  
1895 Aubrey Beardsley © The Trustees  
of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery

Discover the influence of stories and poetry on artists in this new exhibition drawn from the internationally renowned Cecil Higgins Art Gallery Collection. Greek myths and Shakespearian stories, Arthurian legends and poetry will all be explored in the works of artists such as Thomas Gainsborough, Paula Rego, Henry Moore, Ceri Richards and Henri Matisse. A full colour catalogue by curators Professor Christiana Payne, Dr Mary O'Neill and

Victoria Partridge will be available to buy in the shop.

## Minerals, Mysteries and Collectors Display

13 October 2026 to 9 May 2027

Settlement Foyer case



Amethyst crystals with  
quartz © Bev Fowlston

Do you wonder about the shiny bits in your rock collection? How did they form? Why are they shiny? Where did they come from? Who collected The Higgins' rocks, minerals and fossils? This exhibition, in partnership with Bedfordshire Geology Group, will answer these questions. Explore the properties of minerals and their mysterious formation. Discover some of the fabulous collection seen for the first time, along

with the story of those collectors who have donated to the collection over the years.

# TOURS

## Bringing A Group

The Higgins Bedford is the perfect place to bring a group. Join one of our knowledgeable tour guides and discover the history of The Higgins Bedford's outstanding collections. You could also stop for lunch at our on-site café and restaurant, pick up gifts from our beautifully curated shop or enjoy the surrounding attractions in Bedford's Cultural Quarter.

If your group is interested in booking a group tour, please email [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk) or telephone 01234 718618 to discuss the details. Please allow a minimum of four weeks' notice for group bookings. Tours are subject to availability during opening hours. The following tours can be offered for groups of 10–15 people.

## The Higgins Tour

The perfect introductory tour of the highlights of The Higgins Bedford. The tour includes collections relating to the history of Bedford as well as some of the fine and decorative art collections.

Time: 1 hour, £7.75 per person, concessions £6.20

## Fine and Decorative Art Tour



A tour of the internationally renowned Cecil Higgins Art Gallery Collection. Highlights include the furniture by William Burges, linocuts by Edward Bawden and European porcelain.

Time: 1 hour, £7.75 per person, concessions £6.20

## Art Exhibition Tour

A tour of the current art exhibition with the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art.

Time: 30 mins, £3.95 per person, concessions £3.35

## EVENTS

### The Higgins Knitting and Crochet Group

21 April, 19 May, 16 June, 21 July, 18 August, 15 September  
11am-1pm, Free Entry, Booking Essential

This friendly, informal group meets on the third Tuesday of every month to knit and crochet together. They sometimes work on their own projects but also knit for charities and events throughout the year. To join the group or for more information email [gemma.hutton@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.hutton@bedford.gov.uk)

### Portable Antiquities Scheme

Wednesdays 27 May, 29 July and 30 September  
1pm-3pm, Free Entry, Booking Essential

Have you ever found archaeological objects whilst digging in the garden, taking the dog for a walk or metal detecting? Would you like to find out more about them? Matt Fittock, the Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme run by the British Museum can help. Email [Matthew.Fittock@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Fittock@stalbans.gov.uk) to book your place. To find out more visit the website [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk). Please note these sessions may be subject to cancellation at short notice, please book a place or phone The Higgins before you travel to attend.

### Geology Drop-in

With Bev Fowlston from Bedfordshire Geology Group  
Wednesdays 8 April, 13 May, 10 June, 8 July, 12 August  
2pm-4pm, Free Entry, Booking Recommended

Do you have geology specimens that you would like identified? Bring in your best rock, fossil, mineral and crystal finds and



Bev will help to answer your geology questions.

This session is delivered by a volunteer, booking ahead helps us to manage the session on behalf of Bev. Book your place by emailing [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk)



## Aragon Lace demonstrations

Foyer, Free, Drop in

See website for further information and dates

Aragon Lacemakers are delighted to share the traditional craft of bobbin lacemaking at monthly demonstrations with a 'have a go pillow'.

## Young Lacemakers workshops

£2 per child, Booking Essential

See website for further information and dates

Aragon Lacemakers are also offering Young Lacemakers sessions from 2pm to 4pm at The Higgins once a month on a Saturday for children between the ages of 6 to 16 years. The lessons are tailored to each child's pace in a supportive environment and equipment is provided. To book a place please email [Aragonlacemakers@gmail.com](mailto:Aragonlacemakers@gmail.com)

## Earth Day Plant Stall

Saturday 25 April, 11am–3pm

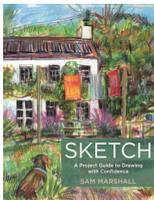
Car park at the front of The Higgins

Grab some bargains for your garden at this community plant stall. The plants are grown and donated by Higgins volunteers, and all the proceeds help to support and develop the gardens around The Higgins Bedford.



## Sketchbook Talk and Guided Drawing Workshop with Sam Marshall

Saturday 2 May, 1.30pm–3.30pm, Free



The session will begin with a short talk about sketchbooks and developing a regular drawing practice, followed by a guided sketching workshop. There will be time at the end for questions, informal chat, and book signing. Participants should bring their own sketchbook, pencils, and a small hand-held object to draw. No specialist materials are required. Sam Marshall is a printmaker living in rural Northamptonshire and trained at the Slade School of Fine Art gaining an MA level Diploma at the Royal Drawing School where she now teaches.

## Airships XR Pop-up Experience

Saturday 16 May, 11am–4pm

Free – Booking Essential

In partnership with Bedford Creative Arts, discover Bedford's airship and aviation heritage through cutting-edge storytelling and technology. You can explore 3D airship



VR Headset image © HyperActive Developments

worlds in immersive VR including virtual museum galleries and historically accurate recreations of the R101 airship's engine cab. This is a free event but we recommend that you book a slot (approx. 20 mins) in advance for the best experience.



Airship XR Logo © BCA/  
HyperActive Developments

For full details of partners and funders for the project as well as booking see <https://bedfordcreativearts.org.uk/events/airships-xr-may-pop-up-experience>

## Volunteers' Week

1 to 7 June

Volunteers' Week is a national celebration of the amazing contribution volunteers make in our society. 25 million people in the UK volunteer informally at least once in the year. At The Higgins there are over 100 registered volunteers who contribute over 5000 volunteering hours every year, supporting every aspect of the programme. Volunteers' Week is our chance to say thank you. We could not do it without you!



## Green Week

Saturday 13 June, 11am–4pm, Free

The Great Big Green Week is the UK's biggest celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. At The Higgins Bedford there will be a host of events and workshops celebrating our local wildlife, green spaces and helping us to connect with nature. Keep an eye on the website and social media channels for more information.



## Refugee Week

15 to 21 June, Free

Refugee Week is the world's largest arts and culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Established in 1998 in the UK, Refugee Week takes place every year around World Refugee Day on 20 June and has since grown into a global movement. The theme for 2026 is Courage.



## Fun Palaces

Saturday 3 October, 11am–4pm, Free

Fun Palaces is a national and international celebration of community sharing. The Higgins Bedford has been celebrating Fun Palaces for over 10 years! It is a free event put together by local people for their own community. At Fun Palaces people come together to share their skills, passions and interests, and to show the world just how brilliant and packed full of genius their community is. Find out more about Fun Palaces here <https://funpalaces.co.uk>.



If you would like to get involved in any of these events in 2026 please contact Gemma Hutton, [gemma.hutton@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.hutton@bedford.gov.uk).

**Rainbow Bedfordshire Crochet and Craft Group**

1 April, 6 May, 3 June, 1 July, 5 August,  
2 September, 2pm–4pm

Free entry, teas, coffees and sometimes biscuits!

A welcoming group in a relaxed social space. No pressure to chat if you don't feel like it. For complete beginners who want to learn as well as people who are more experienced at knitting, sewing or cross stitch. A great place to learn and share resources, tips and advice.



Please contact Rainbow Bedfordshire for more information [info@rainbowbedfordshire.co.uk](mailto:info@rainbowbedfordshire.co.uk).

**Rainbow Bedfordshire – Queer Craftivism workshops**

 LGBTQ+ Themed Craft Workshops  
On selected dates  
The Higgins Museum, MK40 3XD  
keep a look out on our social media or website  
[@rainbowbedfordshire](https://www.instagram.com/rainbowbedfordshire)  
[www.rainbowbedfordshire](http://www.rainbowbedfordshire)  
[info@rainbowbedfordshire](mailto:info@rainbowbedfordshire)

 The Higgins Bedford

 BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

 COMMUNITY FUND

Rainbow Bedfordshire meets regularly at The Higgins and runs Queer Craftivism workshops.

## Reminiscence Sessions

### Remember When?...

Reminiscence Mornings, Thursdays 11am–12.30pm

Free Entry, Refreshments £1, No Need to Book

Friendly and informal reminiscence coffee mornings that are a great way to meet new people. Come and join us for themed sessions to be inspired by memories and stories of the past:

### 16 April – Ukrainian Easter Traditions

Join us to explore the Easter heritage behind the Ukrainian objects displayed before this exhibition finishes and share your own Easter traditions.

### 21 May – Bedfordshire Railways 180 years of the Marston Vale Line

Join us to celebrate the anniversary foyer display and explore your own memories of local railways.

### 25 June – W H Allens Engineering over the decades

Join us in exploring key moments in the company's history and bring your own memories to share.



Courtesy of Bedfordshire Archives Ref. X703/3/67A

### 16 July – Brewing in Bedford

2026 celebrates 150 years since Charles Wells opened his brewery in Bedford, we remember favourite beers and ales, local pubs and breweries.

## Break in August

### 24 September – Snails for All

Inspired by our Edward Bawden exhibition, join us to share your nature stories of garden insects and animals.

For further information contact Lydia McDonald, Keeper of Social History, [Lydia.Mcdonald@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:Lydia.Mcdonald@bedford.gov.uk).

## The Friends of The Higgins Bedford

The Friends organisation plays an important part in the life of the art gallery and museum, individual members can enjoy an excellent range of benefits. Joining the Friends will put you at the heart of The Higgins Bedford.

As a Friend you will have access to:

- Regular talks and lectures
- Exclusive visits to private museums and houses
- New exhibition previews
- Discounts in The Higgins Bedford shop
- Discount on daytime purchases at The Higgins Pantry

### Lecture Programme

Talks are free with Friends' membership. Members are encouraged to bring guests for a donation of £10 cash at the door or a minimum of £8.00 via [www.justgiving.com/charity/friendsofthehiggins](http://www.justgiving.com/charity/friendsofthehiggins)

**Tuesday 7 April**, 7.30pm at St Andrew's Church Hall  
 Sarah Flynn on The Neiger Brothers and Egyptian Revival Jewellery.

Generously sponsored by Barovic Jewellers.

**Tuesday 21 April**, 7.30pm at St Andrew's Church Hall  
 Dr Helen Langdon on Salvator Rosa.

**Tuesday 28 April**, 7.30pm, venue to be confirmed  
 Jane Ewart on An American Aristocrat and His Remarkable Collection of English Silver: Lord Fairhaven's silver at Anglesey Abbey.

**Tuesday 8 September**, 7.30pm, venue to be confirmed  
 Tony Ploszajski on The Birds of Bedfordshire.



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Membership of The Friends of The Higgins Bedford for 2026 is £40 for an individual, £60 for joint membership or £20 for students. To join visit [www.friendsofthehiggins.org](http://www.friendsofthehiggins.org) or scan the QR code. Please check the website for further details of venues and times, plus private visits and special events.

# WELLBEING

A great way for local people to improve their physical and mental health while learning new skills and socialising with others. There may be a limited number of spaces available in our sessions. Unfortunately, it may be necessary to cancel sessions at short notice if trainers are not available.

## **Table Tennis: Every Monday (except Bank Holidays)**

12:30pm–1:30pm

£3 per session

All levels welcome.



## **Pilates: Every Tuesday**

10am–10.45am, £3 per session

All levels welcome.

Bring your own mat.

## **Mindful Walking Every Friday**

11am–12pm, Free

Walk with optional coffee stop afterwards at a local café.

## **Sketching Station during opening hours**

Being creative can help to improve your mental wellbeing. Grab a chair, materials and find a painting or object that you would like to sketch. Materials and paper provided, or bring your own, but no paints please. All levels welcome.

For further details on any of these activities please email [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk)

# FAMILY ACTIVITIES

## Excellent Easter Holiday Activities

31 March, 1, 2, 7, 8 & 9 April, £6.05 per child

Booking Essential, 5-12 years



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Pop up theatre © Lisa Tilley

Enjoy awesome animal encounters and learn skills to become an Archaeology Detective. Produce a 'pop up' theatre, illustrate a book, create your own character badges from clay and make a mosaic mandala from felt.

## May Half Term: 26, 27, 28 May

Workshops at 11.15am, 12.45pm and 2.15pm, £6.05 per child

Booking Essential, 5-12 years

To mark the opening of Edward Bawden's 'Snails for All' exhibition discover how to create your own snail prints with Katie Allen, learn about snails in a workshop with the Wildlife Trust and join a puppet making workshop.

## Summer Holidays

Details of our exciting Summer Holiday programme will be released on our website in June. Expect a range of activities encouraging creativity, curiosity and making!

All workshops last for an hour and are suitable for ages 5 to 12. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Adults do not need to book a ticket.



Bookmarks © Paige Denham

To book a place for children on all holiday activities visit the website at [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online) or call the Box Office on 01234 718044 (open Wednesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm).

**If a booked place is no longer required, please let us know so that it can be made available to another family, thank you!**



## Puggle Club

10 April, 1 May, 5 June, 3 July, 7 August, 4 September  
10.30am–12pm and 1pm–2.30pm, Free, Drop in

A chance to get creative, have fun, and socialise! Come and join in the fun. It's a free drop-in activity, so no need to book. Just pop in any time between 10.30am–12pm and 1–2.30pm, stay for as long as you like. Children must be accompanied by an adult and some activities might not be suitable for children under 36 months. All activities are subject to availability, if the room is getting a bit full, we might ask you to wait until there is space.

## Pop – Up Mini Puggle

15 & 29 April, 13 May, 3 & 17 June, 1 & 15 July



Come and join in with mini Puggle Clubs at St Mary's Church Hall in Goldington from 9.30am-10.30am or Queens Park Community Centre from 12.30–2.15pm. There will also be a session at Bedford Central Library on 26 August 11am – 1pm. We would love you to come and see us for some crafty fun. For more information scan the QR code or visit our website. For all Puggle activities, children must be accompanied by an



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adult and some activities might not be suitable for children under 36 months.

## Storytelling in the Gallery

19 April, 17 May, 21 June, 12 July, 30 August,  
Free, no need to book, 2.30pm

We have three wonderful storytellers telling tales in the Gallery over the next few months. As well as Toby and Belinda, we also have Tom who you may recognise from his rhyme time sessions at the library. All will be leading children on a creative exploration of stories using resources such as puppets, drawings, songs and the artwork from the gallery. Ideal for ages up to 7. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Please be aware, space in the gallery is limited and is offered on a first come, first served basis.



## HOME EDUCATION GROUPS

Book a visit for your group to explore the galleries and collections at your own pace. Also choose from a range of art and history workshops and we will support you to create your own programme of learning that fits with the focus of your group. Please email [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk) for more information.

We are running three dedicated sessions exclusively for Home Education families:

14 April: Toys of the Past

11.15am, (6–9 years)

19 May: Archaeology Detectives Day

11.15am, (6–11 years)

3 June: Geology

2.30pm, (7+)



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### **Booking essential for all sessions.**

All workshops last an hour.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. Each child place costs £3.90; adults do not need to book.

To book a place for children call the Box Office on **01234 718044** (open Wednesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm) or visit the website [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online) or scan this QR code.

**If a booked place is no longer required, please let us know so that it can be made available to another family, thank you!**

## SCHOOL VISITS



The art gallery and museum have much to offer school groups across all key stages and topic areas. Hands-on, curriculum linked sessions and workshops provide students with opportunities to investigate and learn from real and replica artefacts. Fascinating historical objects and world-renowned works of art can be seen on display. All visits by school groups must be booked in advance. We strongly recommend that you contact us to chat about your requirements. Pre-visits are welcome at any time during opening hours.

### Self-Led Visits for Schools

Book a visit for your group to explore the galleries and collections at your own pace. We can advise on the best galleries to visit to suit your area of study and have a range of resources including themed trails to support your visit. Admission to The Higgins Bedford is free and self-led visits can be booked for any time during our usual opening hours.



### History and Art Sessions for Schools



Experience the diverse and world-famous art in our collections. Be inspired by the work on display and create your own art as a result. Explore the galleries and investigate local life over thousands of years of human history using real and replica artefacts and costume. Discover a local Bronze Age burial, handle items used by the Romans, Anglo Saxons and the Vikings. You can investigate life in Bedford Castle, sample life as a Victorian and understand what it was like to be an evacuee in WWII.

Our history sessions include:

- Archaeology Detectives
- The Bronze Age Archer
- Anglo Saxons and the Vikings
- Bedford's Evacuees of World War II
- Toys of the Past
- Romans
- Bedford Castle
- Victorians

Each session offers opportunities for cross-curricular learning too. We can also develop more bespoke sessions, depending on your topic or curriculum requirements.



### Loan Boxes

Get hands-on with history in your school! We offer a range of boxes containing real and replica objects so that you can bring topics to life in your classroom. There is a charge of £25 per box.

### Outreach



We can deliver some learning sessions within your classroom by bringing a selection of objects for children to handle and investigate. If this is of interest to you, contact us by email stating the topic that you are learning about.

### Art with Local Artists – Workshops for Schools

We work with a wonderful range of local artists and crafters and can arrange bespoke workshops to meet the learning needs of your group. Specialist sessions could include printing, clay or lace-making. Charges vary according to workshop and provider.

Please email [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk) to discuss your curriculum needs or for further information on booking and 2026 charges for school groups.

# VISIT US

## Booking

If you are required to book for an event please visit the booking section of our website [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online) or telephone the Box Office, 01234 718044 open Wednesday to Saturday 10am–4pm.

## Easter Opening Hours

Good Friday, 3 April open: ..... 11am–5pm  
Easter Saturday, 4 April open: ..... 11am–5pm  
Easter Sunday: ..... Closed  
Easter Monday, 6 April open: ..... 2–5pm

## The Higgins Pantry

Why not stop for coffee, lunch or tea at the adjacent Pantry café as part of your visit to the Higgins. For large groups it is advisable to make a reservation ahead of your visit, call 01234 912996 or email [eat@thehigginspantry.co.uk](mailto:eat@thehigginspantry.co.uk)

## Shop at The Higgins Bedford

Shop for a range of products inspired by the collections, exhibitions and seasonal events. Cards, gifts, books and toys are available during museum opening hours as well as a bespoke range relating to temporary exhibitions. Every purchase helps to support The Higgins Bedford. National Art Pass members can receive a 10% discount in the shop on stationery and gifts. Please show your membership card at the till.



# ACCESS

## General Access

The Higgins Bedford has step free access to all levels. Wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushchairs and assistance dogs are all welcome.

## Disabled Parking

Limited parking is available in front of the courtyard entrance for visitors with limited mobility, Accessible Parking Permits or Blue Badges. The car park gate is sometimes shut so please contact us ahead of your visit or phone reception on 01234 718185 on your arrival so that the gate can be opened for you.

## Wheelchair Users

There are two adult wheelchairs available to borrow, please contact us ahead of your visit if you would like to book one. There are three wheelchair accessible toilets on the ground floor.

## D/deaf and Hard of Hearing Visitors

Reception areas, meeting and activity rooms are equipped with induction loops, which correspond to the 'T' position on most hearing aids. A portable loop is available for use. The Higgins works with Access Bedford to provide BSL talks, tours and events.

## Blind and Partially Sighted Visitors

Large print captions for temporary exhibitions are available in the art galleries. QR codes to read captions online are available in some of the galleries.

## Families with Members with Autistic Spectrum Conditions

An Autism Friendly Guide on how to get to the museum is available to download from the website [Accessibility\(thehigginsbedford.org.uk\)](https://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Accessibility)

## For Families and Young Children

There is a separate baby change facility on the ground floor.

## Changing Places Toilet

Toilet providing sanitary accommodation for people with multiple and complex disabilities is located at the end of the Settlement Gallery, includes an adult-sized changing bench and hoist.

# CONTACT US

## Opening hours

Tuesday to Saturday  
11am–5pm

Sunday and Bank  
Holiday Mondays 2–5pm

Closed on Mondays,  
Easter Sunday, Christmas  
Day, Boxing Day and  
New Year's Day

Entrance is free  
Donations are welcome

## Visit the website at

[www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk)

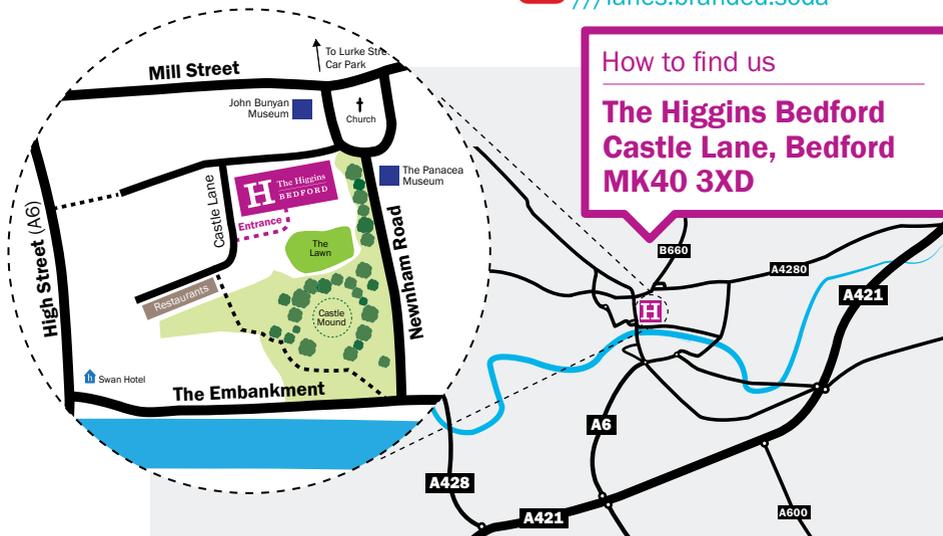
Email [thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk)  
or call us on **01234 718618**

## Stay in touch...

 On Facebook  
[thehigginsbedford](https://www.facebook.com/thehigginsbedford)

 On Instagram  
[thehigginsbedford](https://www.instagram.com/thehigginsbedford)

 what3words  
[///lanes.branded.soda](https://lanes.branded.soda)



## Parking

The nearest public car park is at Lurke Street, just 5 minutes walk from The Higgins Bedford. There is **two hours free parking** every Saturday and free all day on Sundays in all Council town centre single and multi-storey car parks. Further information is available at [www.bedford.gov.uk/parking](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/parking). There are limited parking spaces at the entrance of The Higgins Bedford for visitors with Accessible Parking Permits or Blue Badges.

The Higgins Bedford is a Bedford Borough Council Cultural Service. Home of the Cecil Higgins Collection.

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[design@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:design@bedford.gov.uk)