

THE HIGGINS ART  
GALLERY AND  
MUSEUM, BEDFORD

# WHAT'S ON

April to September 2024



The Filmy Fern Tattoo Parlour by Jonny Hannah



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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

## Edward Bawden and Me

17 February – 13 October 2024

Wixamtree Gallery – Free Entry

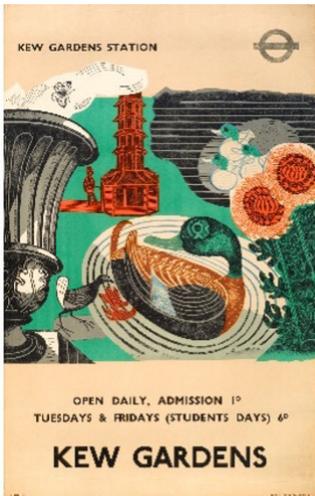
Some of the biggest names in British art, illustration, ceramics and textiles come together in this eclectic exhibition to celebrate the work of printmaker, illustrator, watercolourist and designer Edward Bawden (1903–89).

Edward Bawden & Me is curated by Bawden's good friend, the illustrator and printmaker Chris Brown, who invited a diverse group of thirty artists and makers to respond to works by Edward Bawden in The Higgins Bedford collection. These include Lulu Guinness, Mark Hearld, Vicky Lindo & Bill Brookes, John Broadley, Rob Ryan and John Lawrence. The exhibition features their artistic response, alongside the Bawden work that inspired it.

The range of artists makes Edward Bawden & Me a stunning and fascinating retrospective that celebrates the work of one of Britain's most inventive and influential artists.



Chris Brown by Alun Callender.  
Image courtesy of Alun Callender



Kew Gardens 1936 by Edward Bawden. Image courtesy  
The Higgins Bedford ©The Edward Bawden Estate



Kew Gardens Rag Rug 2023 by Lu Mason.  
Image courtesy of Lu Mason

## Edward Bawden & Me Exhibition Tours

12 March, 18 April, 15 May, 20 June, 16 July, 20 September  
12 - 12.30pm. £3.50, concessions £2.95 – Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art for a half hour tour of some of the highlights of Edward Bawden & Me.



Despair and Promise  
by Vicky Lindo and Bill Brookes

## Edward Bawden Archive Sessions

30 May, 11 June,  
17 September,  
10am - 11.30am  
£12.90, concessions  
£10.35 – Booking Essential

This session is the perfect opportunity for Bawden fans and those new to the subject to have an up-close look at the extensive Edward Bawden collection. Works from the collection, including some that have never been on display before, as well as old favourites, will be introduced by The Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art.

## Rag Rug workshop

9 May 2-4.30pm. £10 – Booking Essential

Join local artist Anne-Marie Abbate to learn the techniques for making a rag rug using a latch hook. Suitable for beginners, tools and some materials are available to use on the day.

**Keep an eye on the website for more Edward Bawden & Me events including artist led workshops.**

To book places on exhibition tours and workshops please call the Box Office on [01234 718044](tel:01234718044) (open Tues – Sat 10am – 4pm), scan the QR code or go to the website [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book\\_Online](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online)

## Edward Bawden & Circus of Illustration

17 February – 13 October 2024

Edward Bawden Gallery – Free Entry



As part of the 'Edward Bawden & Me' celebrations, we asked the Circus of Illustration, a collective of Bedford based artists, to commission new illustrations inspired by the Edward Bawden

Archive. The four committee members and eight up-and-coming artists have each produced a work which will be shown alongside the work by Edward Bawden that inspired it. The results are a testament to the artistic talent of Bedford and the influence of Edward Bawden whose generosity has meant Bedford is forever linked with his work.

## Together for Bedford: An exhibition of Children's Work from The Harpur Trust Art Competition

29 June – 8 September 2024

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry



An exciting exhibition of local children's artwork based around the theme of 'Together For Bedford'. Pupils aged 4 to 18 years are invited to take part in the competition which ties in



with The Harpur Trust's new plan, inspired by the people of Bedford, and its vision of the borough as a community where everyone can thrive. The exhibition explores what does an ideal community look like? With students taking inspiration from what communities they belong to; from where they live or go to school, to a sports team they are a member of or their cultural identity. It celebrates what community in Bedford means to them and how they get involved or inspired.



## On the Wings of a Wirebird

Sophie Gresswell

3 February - 9 June 2024

### On the Wings of a Wirebird | Sophie Gresswell

Continues until 9 June

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry

The culmination of a year-long project to explore interconnected heritage. Following a residency to reach her roots on the island of Saint Helena for the first time, Sophie Gresswell shares experiences and encourages discussion on the global mix of heritage which defines 'British' identity.

The exhibition highlights connections between us, our migration through generations, the borderlessness of Britishness and the people met along our journey. The work includes contributions by Bedford's Odissi dancers from Ananda Arts and the Caribbean Senior Citizens group from Queens Park, who worked with Sophie to explore and redefine objects and narratives present within The Higgins Bedford collections.

[www.sophiegresswell.co.uk](http://www.sophiegresswell.co.uk) @sgresswellart



DEPARTURE LOUNGE



MOX  
Museum of Oxford



Supported using public funding by  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

Please see website for further details about exhibition events, [www.thehigginsbedford.gov.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.gov.uk).

# DISPLAYS

## Cultural Roots Sound System Museum

Until 28 April Somewhere in England foyer, first floor

4 May – 3 November Outside Settlement Gallery, ground floor



The Sound System Museum is live at The Higgins Bedford. Cultural Roots Sound System Museum was started in 1979 by a group of friends in Bedford. This equipment provided valuable entertainment to

Caribbean households in Bedford, owing to discrimination excluding them from socialising in local bars and clubs. The Sound System Museum has preserved this precious memorabilia and hope it will jog the memories and hearts of yesteryear. Visitors can see first-hand what it takes to build and run a reggae sound system and experience this at special events and workshops. Please see our website for further details.

## Bedford River Display

21 – 31 May. Entrance Foyer – Free Entry

The Bedford River project will be showcasing a curated selection of both commissioned and community artworks crafted over the past year. In a spirited tribute to the river, the project has brought together a diverse array of creative expressions, including music, sculptures, paintings, illustrations, photography, storytelling, and poetry. Notably, the project team has sparked inspiration among school students, motivating them to craft imaginative responses to the river. Core to the project has been the belief that the river belongs to us all, and this is reflected in the collection. The project endeavours to inspire all residents of Bedford, irrespective of their backgrounds, to unite in celebration, conservation, and shared responsibility for our cherished River Great Ouse.



## Bedford Car Club

25 May 2024 onwards

Somewhere in England Foyer – Free Entry

This display celebrates the history and heritage of Bedford Car Club. In February 1906 Bedford Automobile Club was founded and in December 1907 were meeting at the Swan Hotel, Bedford High Street. In 1914 the Bedford & District Motorcycle Club was formed and was meeting at The Lion Hotel. By the 1920s these two clubs had merged and

became known as Bedford Motor Club. Members took part in competitions, trials, driving tests, gymkhanas, treasure hunts, dinner dances etc. In 1953 some members broke



away to form Bedford Automobile Enthusiasts Club concentrating on the competition aspects. For three decades the two clubs in Bedford co-existed, but in the early 1980s united as Bedford Car Club, going on to great success in various forms of motorsport such as autotests and rallying. During the 2000s club motorsport declined and nationally motorsport was suspended over the period of the Covid 2019 pandemic. Bedford Car Club closed in 2023, donating their heritage trophies to The Higgins Bedford, which are shared with visitors in this display.



## TOURS and TALKS

Get more from your visit by coming along to one of our tours.



### The Higgins Highlights Tour

8 May 11am – 12, 17 July 2 – 3pm

£6.85, Concessions £5.50 – Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Social History for an introductory tour of the highlights of The Higgins Bedford featuring Bedford's heritage.

### The William Burges Gallery Tour

22 May 11.30am - 12noon

£3.50, concessions £2.95 – Booking Essential

Join the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art across the ropes of the William Burges Gallery for an up-close look at his furniture designs.

### Cecil Higgins Art Gallery at 75 – Celebratory Tour

25 July 2024, 3pm – 4pm

£3.50, concessions £2.95 – Booking Essential

On the 25 July 1949 at 3pm Cecil Higgins Art Gallery opened its doors for the first time. Join us to celebrate 75 years of Mr Higgins' remarkable collection and learn more about its origins in this special tour with the Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art.

### Portable Antiquities Scheme

29 May, 31 July, 25 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)



Bronze mirror found at Old Warden, Bedfordshire, c.1st century BCE  
© The Higgins Bedford

## FRIENDS OF THE HIGGINS BEDFORD



The Friends group was founded in 1988 to support, promote and raise funds for The Higgins Bedford. Over the years, the Friends have been able to support new acquisitions, conservation work, exhibitions and many other projects. The Friends organise a range of events, including a fantastic annual lecture programme delivered online and in person, previews of exhibitions, and visits to rarely-seen houses and gardens.

Becoming a Friend not only supports the museum but offers a range of other benefits, including discounts in the shop, the chance to join visits abroad and access to a catalogue of online talks.

### LECTURE PROGRAMME - FREE TO MEMBERS

Tuesday 16 April, 7.30 pm, St Andrews Church Hall

**Christopher Joll on A Bonfire of History - lost treasures of Madame Tussaud's**

Tuesday 23 April, 12.00 noon, Bunyan Meeting

**Victoria Partridge on William Burges**

Tuesday 21 May, 7.30 pm, St Andrews Church Hall

**Hugh Belsey on Gainsborough's Career – from Ipswich to Bath**

June date to be arranged, 12 noon, The Higgins

**David Boyd Haycock on his new book on Lucy Kemp Welch**

Tuesday 3 September, 7.30pm, St Andrews Church Hall

**Dr Giorgia Bottinelli, Director of the Norwich Castle Museum on John Crome, a Norfolk artist**

Membership of the Friends is £35 for an individual, £50 for joint membership or £20 for students.

Lectures are currently not taking place in the lecture room at The Higgins due to building repairs. Please check the website for further details of venues plus private visits and special events. For further information about members, lectures and events visit [www.friendsofthehiggins.org](http://www.friendsofthehiggins.org).

## EVENTS

### The Higgins Knitting and Crochet Group

Tuesdays: 11am – 1pm

16 April, 21 May, 18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September

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)

### Volunteers Week 1 – 7 June

Volunteers Week is our chance to say **thank you** to the many volunteers that contribute their time, knowledge and skills to The Higgins Bedford. We could not manage without the many brilliant volunteers that support our gardens, school visits, holiday activities, events and day-to-day running.



### The Great Big Green Week Saturday 16 June

Join us for free events celebrating our local environmental heritage and find out how we can all help to protect it for the future. Read more about Great Big Green Week on the website <https://greatbiggreenweek.com> and keep an eye on [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk) for updates on the details of our event.



### Refugee Week 17 – 23 June

“To me, a home is where you feel loved, safe, and cherished.”- Malala Yousafzai

The theme for Refugee Week this year is ‘Our Home’. Keep an eye [www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk) for updates about how we will be celebrating Refugee Week or take a look at the Refugee Week website for information, inspiration and resources.

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/theme-2024-ourhome>



# REMINISCENCE SESSIONS

## **Remember When...? Reminiscence Mornings**

Thursdays 11am – 12.30pm

Free Entry, Refreshments £1, No Need to Book

Join in with friendly and informal reminiscence coffee mornings. A great way to meet new people, be inspired by memories and stories of the past.

### **18 April – Memories of Meltis**

Have fun remembering and exploring the full range of sweets and chocolates, catalogues and stories of the Meltis Sweet Factory, which was based in Bedford for over a century and closed in the late 1990s.

### **16 May – Meaningful Memories**

As part of Dementia Awareness Week our reminiscence session will be exploring what we remember best – our favourite experiences. We will also look at some myth busting around ageing and Dementia.

### **20 June – Cecil Higgins Art Gallery 75 Years**

Come and share your memories of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery from its opening in 1949 to today, what are your favourite exhibits, what would you have chosen for your own collection?

### **18 July – Bedford Castle remembered 800th Anniversary**

As part of this year's anniversary we celebrate 800 years of the Castle mound. Come and enjoy a chat about castle life and times, and share stories of your favourite castles near and far.

## **Break for August**

### **19 September – Inspired by Edward Bawden**

Come and explore our Edward Bawden and Me exhibition. Which Bawden print would you choose to create your own artwork from? Why do we have the Bawden collection, and who are the artists who have been inspired by him in the latest exhibition.

# 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  
All levels welcome.

## **Pilates: Every Tuesday**

10am – 10:45am, £3  
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)

## COMING SOON

### Community Portrait Exhibition

28 September – 23 February 2025

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry

In partnership with Bedford Creative Arts and Fuji film



This exhibition explores the history of photography from 1840s glass-plate techniques to the latest digital technology through images taken by local school children, Bedford College students, community groups

and professional photographers. Delivered in partnership with Fujifilm and Bedford Creative Arts it showcases the Bedford community through their own portraits, whilst inviting the viewer to reflect on the art of image-making through the decades.

### Peter Brathwaite – Rediscovering Black Portraiture

Opening April – Free Entry

During the first lockdown in 2020, with all his performances cancelled, local baritone, artist, broadcaster and writer Peter Brathwaite began researching and reimagining more than 100 artworks. These artworks featured portraits of black sitters, as part of the online #GettyMuseumChallenge to use household objects to restage famous paintings. He called the photographic series *Rediscovering Black Portraiture*.

Brathwaite's exhibition at The Higgins Bedford features a collection of his most fascinating images. His works emphasise issues of power, privilege, and identity, as well as the absence or marginalisation of black individuals in European art.



Peter Brathwaite's restaged version of The Virgin of Guadalupe, and the original artwork, right. Anon, 'The Virgin of Guadalupe'. Oil painting, 1745. Wellcome Collection. Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) / Cropped from original and colour saturated.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

### Easter Holidays – Farms and Gardens

Tuesday 2 & 9, Wednesday 3 & 10 and Thursday 4 & 11 April - Booking Essential  
Join local artists and providers for lots of creative activities inspired by the animals and plants you can discover in our 'Edward Bawden and Me' exhibition.



### May Half Term – Our River

Tuesday 28, Wednesday 29, Thursday 30 and Friday 31 May - Booking Essential  
Join The Bedford River Project and other local artists for workshops that celebrate our cherished River Great Ouse.

### Summer Holidays – The Siege of Bedford Castle

Dates to be confirmed

800 years ago, Bedford Castle was under siege. Come and join in with a variety of castle themed fun and creative activities for the family and discover the story.



**All workshops last for an hour and are suitable for ages 5 to 12. Check our website and social media for up-to-date details on availability and charges for holiday activities.**

To book a place 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 Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm).

## Puggle Club

Creative activities for Early Years  
(age 5 and under)

A chance to get creative, have fun, and socialise! It's a drop-in activity, so no need to book. Just pop in any time between 10:30am and 12:30pm and stay for as long as you like. Please be aware some activities might not be suitable for under 36 months. Children must be accompanied by an adult, come and join in the fun. All activities are subject to availability, if the room is getting a bit full, we might ask you to wait until there is space. Check our website for dates and times.



## Sunday Crafternoons

21 April, 19 May, 16 June

Free Drop-In, no need to book. 2 - 4pm



Suitable for under 12s. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Monthly creative activities for families to have a go at together and enjoy. Please be aware that space is limited and there may be a wait to start.

## I Spy with Kevin the Platypus

Kevin the Platypus has been with the museum for well over 100 years and he still loves exploring. Pick up a free 'I Spy' trail and discover awesome objects and amazing art all over the galleries and collections. There are many themes to choose from.



# 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 10am - 4pm Tuesday to Saturday.

## Easter opening times

Good Friday 11am – 5pm    Easter Saturday 11am – 5pm  
Easter Sunday Closed        Easter Monday 2pm – 5pm

## Bank Holiday opening times

6 May, 27 May, 26 August 2pm – 5pm

**Please check the website before your visit for any changes.**

## 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 276340 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 for 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.

## Visitor Survey

If you have recently visited The Higgins we would love to hear from you. This survey helps us to learn about our audiences and improve The Higgins for everyone. The data collected is non-identifiable, it cannot be traced back to individuals. To fill in the survey follow this link or use the QR Code.  
[www.illuminate-data.org.uk/survey/bslbl1](http://www.illuminate-data.org.uk/survey/bslbl1)



# 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

There are four parking spaces at the entrance to the museum for visitors with Accessible Parking Permits or Blue Badges.

## 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 on request at reception. QR codes are available in some of the galleries to read captions online.

## Families with Members with Autistic Spectrum Conditions

An Autism Friendly Guide to the museum is available at reception or download it from the website.

## For Families and Young Children

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

## Changing Places Toilet

A new toilet that provides sanitary accommodation for people with multiple and complex disabilities will open after Easter. The toilet, located at the end of the Settlement Gallery, includes an adult-sized changing bench and hoist.

# CONTACT US

Entrance is free  
Donations are welcome

## Opening hours

Tuesday to Saturday  
11am – 5pm

Sunday and Bank  
Holiday Mondays 2 – 5pm

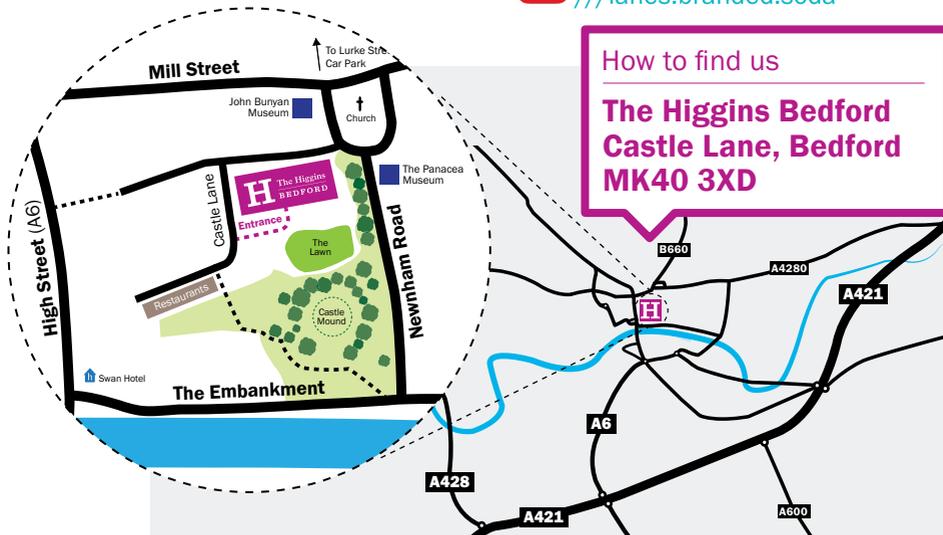
Closed on Mondays,  
Easter Sunday, Christmas  
Day, Boxing Day and  
New Year's Day

## 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. Two hours **free** parking every Saturday and all day **free** parking every Sunday in all Council-owned town centre 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)