

WHAT'S ON

October 2023 to March 2024



JMW Turner (1775-1851) *A First Rate Taking in Stores, 1818*





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About the Higgins 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

EXHIBITIONS

Teasing Out Contingencies

Ends 7 January 2024

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry

Experience new large-scale painting installations and sculptural costumes by interdisciplinary artist Quilla Constance (aka QC). QC's paintings feature opulent interiors from Buckingham Palace alongside carnivalesque interactions with people from London, Bedford and overseas. This project began with a series of 'QC Open Studio' performance workshops at Tate Modern in 2019. Artworks for this show also reference QC's collaboration with presenter-comedians Rob Beckett and Romesh Ranganathan for the TV docuseries 'Rob & Romesh vs Art', Sky Max, which aired during Covid19 lockdown. This project is supported by Arts Council England, Tate Modern and Bedford Creative Arts.



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



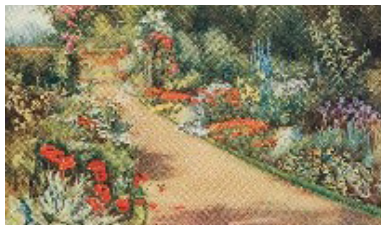
© Quilla Constance

We Are Ten

Ends 28 January 2024

Wixamtree, Connections Galleries – Free entry

**WE ARE
TEN**



Lillian Stannard (1877–1944) *An Old Herbaceous* (Castle Close, Bedford), c.1906

It is ten years since The Higgins Bedford opened its doors following a major refurbishment uniting the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery and Bedford Museum. To celebrate our first decade we asked some of the amazing

people that we have worked with during this time to choose an artwork from our collection. The result is a vibrant mix of paintings and prints of old favourites and rarely shown works.



Rob Maddams, St Cuthbert's © The Maddams Family

In the Connections Gallery is the choice of Richard Wildman and his brother Stephen. Richard was one of the town's best known historians and protector of some its finest buildings. After his

death in 2018, his brother generously donated a large part of Richard's collection of paintings of Bedford to The Higgins. Over twenty pictures from the collection are on display.

Edward Bawden - Trains, Planes and Automobiles

Ends Spring 2024

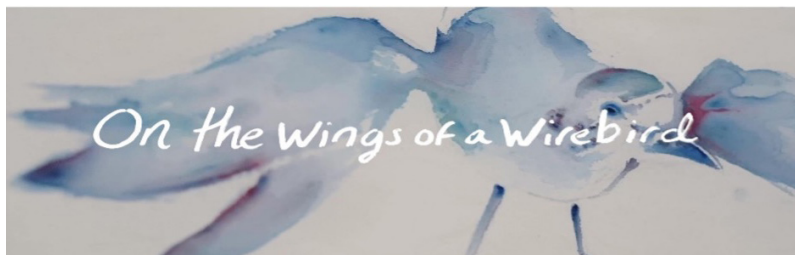
Edward Bawden Gallery – Free Entry

Let Edward Bawden transport you in this exhibition celebrating all things travel.

Selected from the many works Edward Bawden left to us in Bedford, we explore how trains, planes, automobiles and the occasional boat are in so many of his works including well-known prints, advertising campaigns for Ealing Studios and London Transport, wallpapers and private commissions.



Edward Bawden (1903-1989), *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, 1952 © The Edward Bawden Estate



On the Wings of a Wirebird | Sophie Gresswell

3 February – 9 June 2024

Sir William Harpur Gallery – Free Entry

The culmination of a yearlong 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 @sgresswellart



DEPARTURE LOUNGE



MOX
Museum of Oxford



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Edward Bawden & Me

Opening 17 February 2024

Wixamtree and Connections Galleries – Free Entry



Edward Bawden in his Studio,
image commissioned by
Braintree and Witham Times.

This exciting exhibition will celebrate the work of Edward Bawden through the work of a new generation of artists. The exhibition is curated by Edward's good friend, illustrator and printmaker, Chris Brown. Chris has chosen twenty well-known artists working today to produce art works inspired by

Bawden. These new pieces will be shown alongside the works from the

Higgins Bawden archive that have inspired them. Chris has chosen a diverse range of artists and makers from different disciplines to make this exhibition an eclectic, fun loving celebration of Bawden's 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 art work based around the theme of 'Together For Bedford'. Pupils aged 4 - 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.

EXHIBITION TOURS

The Richard Wildman Collection

27 Sept 2023, 18 October 2023, 2pm – 2.30pm

£3.25, concessions £2.75 – Booking Essential

Join Keeper of Social History, Lydia Saul, for a tour of the Richard Wildman collection of local scenes in the Connections Gallery.

We Are Ten Art Collection

4 October 2023, 15 November 2023, 2pm – 2.30pm

£3.25, concessions £2.75 – Booking Essential

Join Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, Victoria Partridge, for a tour of some of the highlights of the community exhibition in the Wixamtree Gallery.

Edward Bawden Exhibition Tour

6 December 2023, 17 January 2023, 11.30pm – 12pm

£3.25, concessions £2.75 – Booking Essential

Join Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, Victoria Partridge, for a tour of some of the highlights of the current exhibition.

To book places on exhibition tours please call the Box Office on **01234 718044** (open Tues – Sat 10am – 4pm), scan the QR code or go to the website www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online



TOURS and TALKS

Get more from your visit by coming along to one of our tours. Book by scanning the QR code.



The Higgins Highlights Tour

1 November 2-3pm

£6.35, Concessions £5.10 – Booking Essential

This introductory tour of the highlights of The Higgins Bedford features objects relating to the history of Bedford.

The William Burges Gallery Tour

9 November 12.30-1pm

£3.25, Concessions £2.75 – Booking Essential



Join Victoria Partridge, Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, for a look at some of the furniture and objects by the eccentric Gothic designer, William Burges.

William Burges (1827 – 1881), Zodiac Tile – Sagittarius
© Trustees of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery

Fine and Decorative Art Tour

10 January 12-1pm

£6.35, Concessions £5.10 – Booking Essential

Have you ever wanted to know how the art collections were formed and why they are here in Bedford? Then join Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, Victoria Partridge, for a tour of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery Collection.

Bedford's Planes, Trains and Automobiles Talk

7 February 2024 2 – 2.30pm

£3.25, Concessions £2.75 – Booking Essential

Join Lydia Saul, Keeper of Social History, and explore Bedford's transport heritage, including Airship R101, Bedford Times coach, Bedford Railway Station and the Adams car.



Adams Mail Phaeton Car, 1907
© The Higgins Bedford

DISPLAYS



Aragon Lacemakers: Keeping Lacemaking Alive

Ends 28 April 2024

Outside Settlement Gallery – Free Entry



Bobbin Lace is integral to the history of Bedford as it was a major local cottage industry. The method of making lace hasn't changed but the style has, bringing lace up to date with modern trends. The

Aragon Lacemakers are delighted to display a variety of contemporary lace made by members; from bracelets to gloves and coloured pictures to garters. There will also be plenty of opportunities to have a go at this fascinating heritage craft - it's easier than it looks!

Bedford Urban Sketchers

The Staircase Gallery

Ends February 2024

This display showcases the work of seventeen members of the Bedford Urban Sketchers Group that meet once a month in a new location in and around Bedford. On a Saturday in December 2022 the sketching group met at The Higgins Bedford and the current display shows work created on that day with sweeping scenes of the gallery and resident stuffed platypus Kevin all included.



Tony Underhill The Higgins
Bedford, 2022



Cultural Roots Sound System Museum

7 October 2023 – 28 April 2024

Outside Settlement Gallery – Free Entry



Recently showcased at the Pride of Place Bedford Shop and the Harper Suite Windrush Day event, the Cultural Roots Sound System Museum is live at The Higgins this October. Cultural Roots Sound System

was started in 1979 by a group of friends in Bedford. This collective provided valuable entertainment to the Caribbean community in Bedford. Owing to discrimination certain mainstream establishments were not accessible for socialising, including some bars and clubs. Cultural Roots has preserved some precious memorabilia with the hope it will jog the memories and hearts of yesteryear whilst educating the young on life back then. 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's Evolving High Street Past, Present and Future photographic display

1 March – 1 April 2024 The Foyer – Free Entry

This display will celebrate the completion of Bedford's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme, with a look at our ever-evolving High Street through the decades. The photographs and artwork will provide a chance to reflect on our changing High Street, including the fantastic restoration works and community events that have taken place over the last four years. The HSHAZ Programme has been delivered by Bedford Borough Council with support from Bedford BID, SEMLEP and Historic England.



Historic England



BedfordBID
Business Improvement District
Funded by Town Centre Businesses

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



Paul Nash (1889-1946)
Dymchurch, 1922

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 and café, the chance to join visits abroad, and access to a catalogue of online talks. Membership of the Friends is £35 for an individual, £50 for joint membership or £20 for students.

Lecture Programme

The lectures will be held on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm.

Free to members, venue to be confirmed.

5 September	Professor David Ekserdjian on the Altarpiece in Renaissance Art
26 September	Professor Jane Ridley on Edward VII - note this is a live Zoom from Los Angeles
24 October	Patrick Baty on the Artists' Rifles in Wartime
7 November	Professor David Ekserdjian on the work and films of Powell and Pressburger
28 November	Dr Evelyn Silber on Jacob Epstein, Artist and Sculptor
January 2024 date tbc	Simon Carter on the Artists of St Paul's Cathedral

There will also be private visits and special events. For further information about members, lectures and events visit www.friendsofthehiggins.org



EVENTS

Fun Palaces

Saturday 7 October 11am – 4pm

An exciting programme of FREE creative and wellbeing events for adults, children and families. Please save the date, and keep an eye on our social media channels and the website for further details.



The Higgins Knitting and Crochet Group

Tuesdays: 17 October, 21 November, 19 December, 16 January, 20 February, 19 March: 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

LGBT+ History Month

February 2024, Free Entry



Join us for our annual LGBT+ History Month celebrations. This year there will be a display in the foyer and events in partnership with the Queer Craftivism Collective and ELFT Rainbow

Bedfordshire steering group. Come and enjoy a range of activities and inspiring talks throughout the month. Keep an eye on our website and social media for up-to-date details. [#RainbowBedfordshire](https://www.rainbowbedfordshire.org.uk) strives to actively challenge stigma and loneliness by informing best practices through training, increasing visibility and social inclusion, and through building LGBTQ+/ally networks.

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.

12 October – Works Social Clubs

Join us to explore the wide range of clubs; such as sports, crafts or social outings run by local companies for their employees by local firms including Allens, Texas Instruments and London Brick Company.

9 November – Supernatural Stories

Come and share your slightly spooky stories and experiences with the group, from ghost stories to strange happenings we will be exploring the paranormal.

14 December – Happy Holidays

We will be celebrating the festive season thinking about holidays at home and abroad, some winter sun and time spent with friends or family.

Break for January

15 February – Hobbies

Bring your favourite pastimes to share with the group, be that lace-making, reading, playing chess, collecting coins or comics, following football clubs, playing a ukulele, the more weird and wonderful the better.

14 March – High Street Memories

We will be exploring the High Street Heritage Action Zone funded display of Bedford High Street photographs past and present at The Higgins, then sharing some of our own High Street highlights we have enjoyed over the decades.

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.

Yoga Every Monday (except Bank Holidays 25 Dec and 1 Jan)
10:30am – 11:30am, £5

Enquiries and to book a place: junehannigan@gmail.com

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

PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

29 November, 31 January, 27 March 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 to book your place. To find out more visit the website 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.

SHOP AT THE HIGGINS BEDFORD



Our shop has 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 exhibitions. Every purchase supports The Higgins Bedford. National Art Pass members can receive a 10% discount in the shop on stationery and gifts.

GROUP TOURS

Discover the history of outstanding collections, stop for lunch at The Higgins Pantry café, shop for cards and gifts and enjoy the surrounding attractions of Bedford's Cultural Quarter. If your group is interested in booking a group tour, please email thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk or telephone **01234 718618** to discuss details. Please allow a minimum of four weeks' notice for group bookings. Tours are subject to availability during opening hours.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES



October Half Term – Bugs, Birds and Beasts

Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25, Thursday 26 and Friday 27 October. Workshops start at 11:15 and 1:15

Booking Essential

Get creative with family activities inspired by creepy crawlies and creatures on display.

Christmas Holidays

Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 December

Drop in any time between 1pm and 3pm

Free. No need to book.

Getting ready for the New Year? Pop in and have a go at crafty activities to get you in the mood.

February Half Term – Print!

Tuesday 20, Wednesday 21, Thursday 22 and Friday 23 February. Workshops start at 11:15, 12:45 and 2:15

Booking Essential

Inspired by the work of Edward Bawden – get printing this half term.

Workshops last for an hour and are aimed at 5 to 12 year olds. Check our website and social media for up to date details on all Family Activities.



To book a place on all holiday activities visit the website at www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Book_Online or call the Box Office on **01234 718044** (open Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm).

Sunday Crafternoons

24 September, 22 October, 26 November, 17 December,
21 January, 18 February, 24 March

Pop in any time between 2pm and 4pm

Free, No Need to Book

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. Suitable for under 12s. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

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.



SCHOOL VISITS



The art gallery and museum has so 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 as well as the fascinating historical objects and world-renowned works of art 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.

Volunteers Wanted: Could you help to support school visits?

We are looking for volunteers who would like to lead and support our formal learning sessions, school visits and holiday activities. The sessions are fun, creative and hands-on. You would be joining a dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable team. Full training will be provided. With more volunteers we will be able to provide meaningful and memorable sessions to even more school children. For a volunteer application form and more information contact gemma.hutton@bedford.gov.uk or on 01234 276365.





History Sessions for Schools from less than £3 per pupil

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, investigate life in Bedford Castle, take part in a Victorian Wash Day, find out about local people, places and events, and much more.

Art Workshops for Schools from less than £3.50 per pupil

Explore the diverse and world famous art in our collections. Be inspired by the work on display and create your own art. Standard art workshops include portraits and printing. Have a go at different skills and media through hands-on workshops inspired by art and objects on display. Exhibition-led and Topic-led workshops are inspired by the themed art exhibitions on display or objects that link to cross-curricular topics and use a range of media to encourage creativity and imagination. We can usually find links to most cross-curricular topics.

Art with Local Artists – Workshops for Schools

We work with a range of local artists and crafters and can arrange workshops at The Higgins led by specialists in areas that include printing, clay and lace-making. Charges vary according to workshop and provider. Please email thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk to discuss your curriculum needs or for further information on booking and 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 or telephone the Box Office on 01234 718044 between 10am and 4pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Christmas holiday opening times

Saturday 23: 11am–5pm

Sunday 24: closed

Monday 25: closed

Tuesday 26: closed

Weds 27: 11am–5pm

Thursday 28: 11am–5pm

Friday 29: 11am–5pm

Saturday 30: 11am–5pm

Sunday 31: closed

Monday 1: closed

From Tues 2: usual opening hours apply

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 eat@thehigginspantry.co.uk

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.

<https://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 two 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 galleries. 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.

NTACT 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

Email thehiggins@bedford.gov.uk

or call us on 01234 718618

Stay in touch...



On Facebook

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



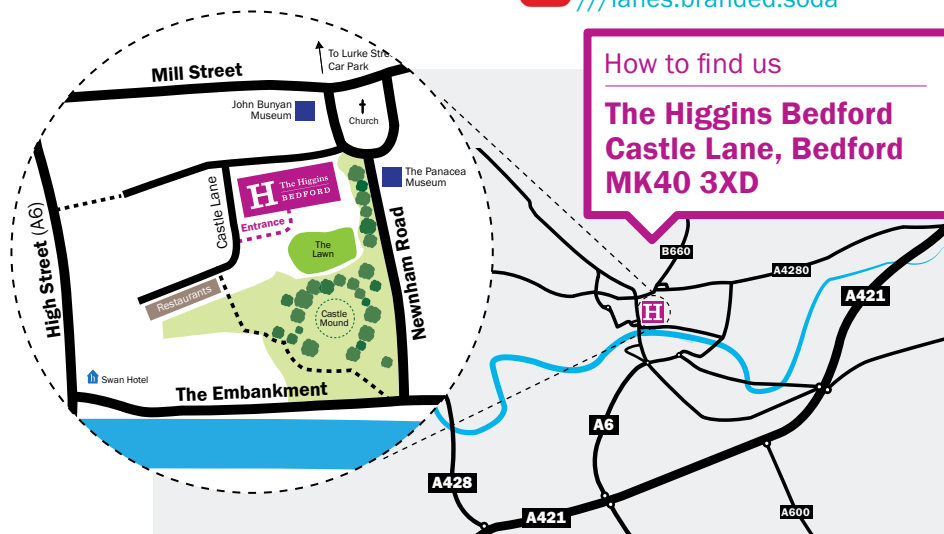
On Instagram

[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. 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