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Hello From The Editor

Welcome to the February edition of the Western Park Gazette.

We start this month off with a flood of not quite biblical proportions but enough to stop water supplies across a large part of West Leicester following a blown water main on King Richard's Road. Roger Blackmore delves into the history of Leicester's hotels and Helen Knott gets twitchy about the local bird population. Rod Smart from Hinckley Road Policing Unit has his update and our own green goblin, Tony Huxley, contemplates planting tubers.

The Square Mile project keep us up to date with their activities and we find out what events are planned this year to fund the rebuilding of Tin Annie, on Letchworth Road. If you're feeling nice and sharp there's the ever present Brain Tazers lying in wait on the inside back cover.

We are always looking to feature local stories and events and if you fancy trying your hand at writing for us, now would be the ideal time to get in touch.

Email: editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk

Visit www.westernparkgazette.co.uk

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Events Diary

Fosse Singers: Fosse N'hood Centre. Weds. 7pm.
International Folk Dancing: Monthly 2nd & 4th Fri. St. Anne's Hall. 2-4pm. T: Geoff on 0116 285 8352.
Peter Crebbin's Cool Swing Band: 1st Sun Monthly. Café Chino at Hilton Hotel, Meridian. 1-3.30pm.
Thursday Club: Thursdays. 2-4pm. Robert Hall, 147 Narborough Rd.
Heritage Sundays: Last Sunday of the month. Mediaeval Leicester open days/guided tours. 11-3pm. www.goleicestershire.com
The Snail & the Whale: 20/21st Feb. Curve Theatre.
Full Monty: 2-7th March: De Montfort Hall
Friday Felters Crafts: 6th March. Gorse Hill City farm. 10.30-12.30pm. £2.50.
Pop-up Tea Room & Bakery: Sat 4th March. St. Anne's Ch. Hall. 10.30-3pm. 50p. (*Tin Annie Fund*)
Secret Diary of Adrian Mole – The Musical: 7th March-4th April. Curve Theatre.
Big History Quiz: 11th March. Jewry Wall Mus. 7pm. Bar available. Entry £1.00.
The Bodyguard: 15th-26th March. De Monfort Hall.
Into the Woods: 18-22nd March. Hansom Hall, Wellington St. Tickets £12.50 or £5.00 concession from 0750 090 0737
Reinterment of King Richard III Celebrations: From 20th March. **Reinterment** - 26nd March at Leicester Cathedral. www.kingrichardinleicester.com

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Mick and Drenched

People living in parts of West Leicester including the Tudor Road area, Westcotes and Western Park had their water supply disrupted following a major mains burst on King Richard's Road.

Early on Sunday morning, the 1st February, water gushed up through the pavement outside Mick and Dens' furniture store at a rate of 400 litres a minute before Severn Trent engineers arrived at 8.30am to set about repairs.



Mick and Den's Mick Thompson said: "I got a call from the police at 6.30 telling me the main had blown outside the shop. That was a good start to the month. I got here in ten minutes flat. It looked like someone had picked up the shop and put it in the middle of a lake. There was water inside for about fifteen feet,

but the real damage was at the back where there's a slight slope and the storage containers got about a foot of water in them".



Mr. Thomson reckoned the damage to stock would run into tens of thousands of pounds and trade had been badly hit because customers had to enter through the back door.

As heaters dried out the main entrance he said: "We've managed to stay open. Seven Trent couldn't have done any more and the cleaning company bent over backwards to help. I didn't lose my rag once!"

It's thought that the 24 inch mains pipe burst due to the same freezing and thawing action that has led to an increase in the number of pipe fractures engineers have had to deal with.

Water was switched back on a few hours later but hundreds complained to Severn Trent about the disrupted service.

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Leicester's Historic Hotels

When I first came to Leicester University as a student back in 1960, one of my first purchases was a small guidebook published by the City Council. Tucked away in the back of the guide was a list of hotels and guesthouses in the City which makes quite interesting reading today.

For some strange reason the Grand Hotel is not included in the list. Pride of place instead goes to the 92 bedroom Bell Hotel on Humberstone Gate standing on part of the site which is the Haymarket Centre today. Situated close by the Town Hall, on Horsefair Street, was the Royal Hotel with 30 bedrooms. It is now a bank.

One of the other larger hotels listed is The Midland Hotel on Princess Road with 42 bedrooms. I remember attending a Conference there in the 1970's and indeed the building still stands although it has long ceased to be a hotel.

Not far away from the Midland and still very much in business today is the Belmont at the junction of New Walk and De Montfort Street, once one of



Photo: Denis Callow

forty or so hotels and guesthouses within reasonable walking distance of London Road Station. Its personable proprietor is Mr Jim Bowie, currently also the President of Leicester Chamber of Commerce.

Another hotel which has sadly gone out of business is of course the Empire on Fosse Road now destined to become a Lidl store. Its future has been the topic of considerable public controversy locally. Gone too is the much smaller Freemans Arms on Aylestone Road.

Unsurprisingly, for a city which traditionally boasted a sizeable Temperance movement, a considerable number of unlicensed hotels are listed in my 1960 guide. These include the Alexandra and the Tranby up in Stonegate as well as the Kenilworth on de Montfort Street, and the Prebend close to London Road Station. Some readers will remember the large temperance posters regularly displayed opposite the station advocating opposition to alcoholic drink in all its forms.

It is now 55 years since I bought my little guide to the City of Leicester. The list of hotels comes from an age well before the advent of Travelodge and Premier Inn when most hotels were family run rather than part of chains. I am sure the list will prompt various recollections of times past.

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West Leicester based journalist and broadcaster
Helen Knott gets very twitchy over a conspiracy
from our feathered friends...

KNOTT'S LANDING

It was the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch recently and frankly things were a bit disappointing at our house. Every bird in the garden had received a memo that a woman wielding a pen and a clipboard of mass destruction would be around and they should avoid the area.

Normally our garden is stuffed with birds. My neighbour feeds them regularly with those fat balls. I know this because the squirrels steal the fat balls and their containers and they end up in my garden scattered around like pixie cages! I have to gather them up and then give them back although I rarely get all the parts! This attracts a lot of birds. I've seen goldfinches, long tailed tits, a blue jay, lots of magpies, doves, pigeons, Jenny Wren's, robins, blue tits and more...

The day I go to look at what's in the garden for the RSPB there is nothing. It's like a desert out there. Not even the pigeons showed up and I sat there for an hour!

The very next day, at exactly the same time, I'm sat there and it's like an aviary! Every bird imaginable is putting in an appearance. If a bald eagle had landed I wouldn't have been surprised! So now I'm in the odd position of not knowing whether to submit my form. Do I put it in knowing it's an unrepresentative sample of bird activity in my garden? Or do I do another sneaky survey and put that in instead? Will I skew the figures? Will the RSPB be telling us birds are declining here but actually they are doing OK? It can't just be my garden that saw a bird drought on the appointed weekend! Or can it? Maybe they have ganged up and decided to torment me? Or perhaps I should stop with the conspiracy theory and have a glass of wine!

Helen Knott

Listen to Helen on Smooth Radio 106.6FM on Sunday afternoons from 2.00pm until 6.00pm



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DMU Square Mile is working with residents to establish a forum where people can highlight some of the issues they face in the community and work towards solutions with the help of DMU, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire Police and Leicestershire NHS Partnership.

DMU Square Mile will help residents grow ideas and establish projects for the community; with the support of the city council, local NHS and the Police.

Anyone wishing to join the forum should contact Square Mile squaremile@dmu.ac.uk, or by phone - (0116) 257 7135.



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Creat-A-Con is a new FREE event taking place at De Montfort University, which aims to inspire young people in the key S.T.E.M. areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

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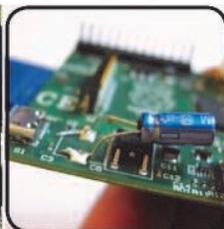
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The event is open exclusively to primary and secondary students (inc. parents/guardians) from 10am to 12pm, and to the general public from 12pm to 6pm. Entry is free to all.

Taking a more interactive and entertaining approach to learning, Creat-A-Con has brought together examples of the most engaging projects from the local area, including Interact Labs, Leicester Hackspace, Face Your Elephant, Starbase Leicester and more!



Robotics Raspberry Pi

This growing list of exhibitors will be showing off a range of features, including 3D printing, Raspberry Pi, Sonic Pi, a variety of computer controlled, artistic, and autonomous robots, Arduino, and a selection of Minecraft, Lego, and K'Nex challenges.

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In relation to the Western Park Residents Parking Scheme, the Gazette's last issue quoted one resident, Mr Sahota, saying he has 18 signed endorsements in favour of the scheme. However, since the scheme was introduced, a number of residents, including myself, visited over 260 households in the scheme area, and of those we found home no less than 114 signed a petition against the scheme, with 19 saying they were in favour.

There are of course valid arguments both for and against residential parking schemes. But it is important that we should not allow local residents to be pitted against one another by this issue. It is understandable that some are now happy they can park outside their homes. But it is also worthwhile to bear in mind that residents at the top of Upperton and Barclay roads, and also on Braunstone Avenue, have recently contacted the council to complain that they can no longer do so! That is the drawback with the council's 'solution' - it just displaces the problem, and turns out to be no solution at all.

It appears that a great deal of local taxpayers' money is being squandered by the council, in order that some will be able to say in this spring's upcoming elections for Council and Mayor, 'We did something about parking problems'.

Harry Stannard

To comment please email:

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LIZ LAUNCHES THURSDAY CLUB

Leicester West MP Liz Kendall has opened the new Thursday Club at the Robert Hall Community Centre.

The club is based in the community church at the corner of Narborough and Upperton Roads and offers space for many activities including Kick-boxing an amateur dramatics. But a start-up grant from the East Midlands Baptist Association now makes it possible to run a regular club on Thursdays for anyone to come in for a chat, relax, surf the web, read the papers or make friends and enjoy hot and cold refreshments.



Photo: Mark Emmerson

Liz Kendall & Rev Pam Bryan

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February Police Update

The Smart View with Sgt. Rod Smart

In the early hours of 7th January, a 42 year old man and a 15 year old youth, cycling the wrong way down St Margaret's Way, were stopped by Police and found to be in possession of four ironing boards and a number of old cycle tyres. It transpired that the ironing boards had been stolen from a nearby business and the tyres were from a skip. The older of the two has been charged with theft and was remanded in custody due to being wanted on warrant for failing to appear in Court.

On 8th January a house on Dane Street was burgled. A 26 year old man of no fixed abode has been charged and remanded in custody. He has since been sentenced to fifteen month imprisonment for the offence.

On 10th January a football fan walking down Hinckley Road towards the match was searched and found to be in possession of sand lined motorcycle gloves. In interview the man gave an explanation that he had parked his motorcycle round the corner but he had no keys on him and no bike could be found. A 24 year old Ayleston man has now been charged with possession of an offensive weapon. He has been bailed to appear in Court and has been issued with a Football Banning Order.

On 20th January, a 92 year old Fosse Road North resident was the victim of a distraction burglary by a man who tricked his way into her address. The police are following up a number of enquiries to identify the offender. Readers with elderly or infirm neighbours are asked to keep an eye on them and challenge any suspicious behaviour or contact the police.

On the evening of 25 January, a fight took place at shared accommodation on Ashleigh Road. A 23 year old resident of a hostel in the Stoneygate area has been charged with assault.

In the early hours of 31st January a 41 year old local man was robbed as he walked home along Colwell Road. His gold chain was snatched from his neck and his wristwatch, rings and cash were demanded from him. Although a disturbing incident, violent crimes are rare in this area.

On 31st January a 25 year old man from the west of the County attended a Police station in the City to report that a few days earlier he had been abducted from the Tudor Road area and forcibly had a picture of male genitalia tattooed on his forehead. He was then returned to Tudor Road. Although there appeared to be some form of tattoo, officers were unable to confirm exactly what was on his forehead due to him having to wear a considerable amount of concealer which he declined to remove. The gentleman has declined to make a complaint.

Tony Huxley's Compost Corner



Many plants are holding their breath for the start of spring. But

no matter what the season, there's always a something to fill any lull. With deciduous plants now leafless, normally shady spots become a temporary oasis for plants that can tolerate drier, darker areas the rest of the year. Spring bulbs are the usual choice for planting in such places, but how about tubers instead? Earlier than snowdrops and brighter than crocus, cyclamen are great for naturalising under trees and shady spots. Their blooms range from the pure white of *C.hederifolium albiflorum* to the deepest lilacs, pinks and magentas like *C.pseudibericum*. My favourite has to be *C.coum*. Deep pink flowers, fully hardy and shade tolerant; it's tough and beautiful. Cyclamen can flower for long periods and have attractive foliage that's often marbled or silver flecked.

Cyclamen prefer being planted quite shallow in humus rich soil that doesn't get water logged so dig in plenty of garden compost. Check tubers carefully to ensure they're planted the right way

up. Like all plants for naturalising, try not to disturb too much; those round flattened tubers are very easy to skewer on the end of a fork! The tubers can also fall prey to rodents.

Cyclamen are often given as houseplants at Christmas and Easter. These are usually *C.persicum* normally found in the Middle East up to 1200 meters above sea level. They have amazing displays of vivid, long lasting blooms but are not frost hardy. When the leaves begin to die off, reduce watering and allow the plants to have a dormant period of 2-3 months.

Of course cyclamen can provide more than just winter interest. With the right choice of species you can have them flowering all year round in the garden. And if you do lose interest in them they can always feed them to your hungry pigs, their common name being Sowbread!

Tony Huxley



C.persicum



Martin Page

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Tin Annie Fundraising

After 101 years the elderly Church Hall on Letchworth Road is slowly edging towards a complete rebuilding thanks to the efforts of local fundraisers.

This year the fundraising work continues with events every month until May, including the unique chance to buy a brick for the new Community Church Hall when it's built.

EVENTS

SATURDAY 14th MARCH: Sponsored Dog Walk on Western Park between 8.30 and 11.30am.

Annie's Bakery and Tea Room between 10.00 and 1.00pm with tea, coffee, fresh bread, cakes and children's activities.

EASTER SATURDAY 5TH APRIL: Easter Egg Hunt on Western Park between 2.30 & 3.30pm.

Messy Church. Easter themed fun for young families from 4.00 until 6.00pm.

SATURDAY 18th APRIL: Spring Fair between 11-2.00pm, including tombola, bric-a-brac, cakes, crafts, toys etc. Free entry and all welcome.

SATURDAY 16th MAY: Launch of the 'Buy a Brick' scheme. Bricks can be bought for £20 each as a present, in memory of someone special or just to show support for the project.

SATURDAY 23rd MAY: Storytelling with Tom the Tale Teller between 5.00 and 6.00pm. Suitable for all, followed by a 'bring and share' meal. Tickets £3.00 per child. **Lucky themed adult storytelling** from 7.30-9.00pm. Tickets £7.50 with wine and refreshments.

All enquiries to Michael walker: 0116 224 6047 or Cathy Harrell 0789 1127 481.

Open Gardens

This year's Western Park Open Garden event will be in aid of the Tin Annie fund and takes place on the 27th and 28th of June .

Organisers say they are looking for at least 24 gardens to be open to the public but hope more households will participate.

Other activities take place at St. Anne's Church and in the hall. For more information contact:

Brenda Cavers: 07851

462 706, Pat Abraham: 0116 285 7795

Caroline Archer: 07926 637 465



BRAIN *TAZERS*

1		2		3		4
5						
6				7		
8						

1 Across: Type of red. 1 Down: Tender hugs
 3. Titanic error. 3. Sexton. 4 Sewing the pine. 5.
 To down. 6. An untruth 7. Unwell 8. Functional
 vision. © Paul Towers

		6			5			7
	5							
		7	1	2				
	4	3						7
								6
		2		4		5		
7	6						4	1
				5	6	9		
							8	
2			8					1

- The maker doesn't need it, the buyer doesn't use it and the user uses it without knowing. What is it?
- "At Dicky Straps" is an anagram of which celebration?
- One morning two trains speed through an empty station on the same track but don't collide. Why not?
- A man enters a police station and destroys hundreds of fingerprints. Why isn't he arrested?

(Solutions at www.westernparkgazette.co.uk)

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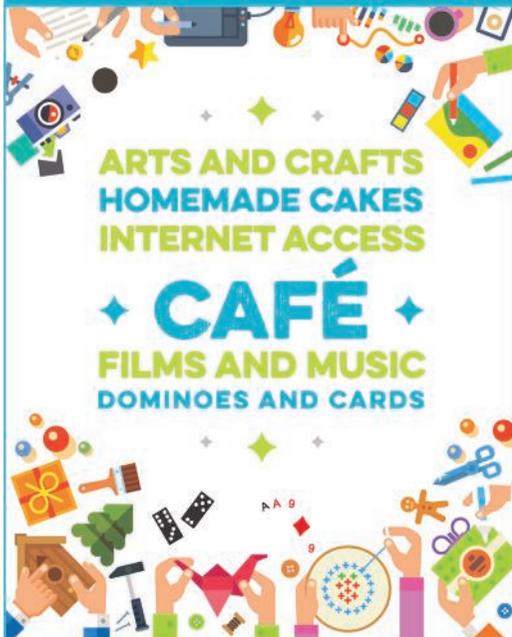
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