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## Hello From The Editor

Welcome to the October edition of the Western Park Gazette.

This month: Leicester's only pub theatre, luckily for us in the West End, is searching for new management to guide it onto even greater things. The traffic snarl up between Glenfield Road and Letchworth Road is angering residents as they try to improve the situation and The Braunstone Gate Winter festival plans race ahead.

Since Halloween is just around the corner we look at its history with Chez, our local Celtic expert, and we stay with the historical theme as Roger Blackmore walks the city's ancient trackways. We also have a report from the recent dig at Castle Park over in Beaumont Leys.

In the spirit of the season, Tony Huxley, gets into Halloween with a suggestion or two guaranteed to scare the neighbours half to death, Mike Hooper from Hinckley Road Policing Unit has his update and Helen Knott opens up her inner cave girl to discover the delights of a garden fire pit.

Finally, the Sudoku and crossword are ready to batter the matter on the inside back page.

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If you've got a local news story then email:

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## Events Diary

**Pub Quiz:** Monthly last Tues. WE Brewery Braunstone Gate. 8-10pm.

**Peter Crebbin's Cool Swing Band:** 1st Sun Monthly. Café Chino at Hilton Hotel, Meridian. 1-3.30pm

**Thursday Club:** 2-4pm. Robert Hall, 147 Narb' Rd.

**West End Pay As You Feel Café:** Thurs 7-8.30pm. Tues, Fri & Sat 11-3pm. WE Centre. Andrewes St.

**Westfield Gallery:** Mon-Sat. 81 Westfield Rd. Call 0116 285 8548 to view.

**Half term Horror:** 20th Oct. Guildhall. 11-3pm.

**Simply Gershwin:** 22nd Oct. DeMont Hall. 7.30pm.

**Pumpkin Prize Giving/McMillan Coffee Morn:** 22 Oct. Groby Rd Allotments. 10-2pm.

**Patricia Cornwell In Conversation:** 24th Oct. DeMont Hall 7pm. Free. Contact venue.

**The Importance of Being Ernest:** Until 29 Oct. Curve. [curveonline.co.uk](http://curveonline.co.uk)

**Julian Clary:** 28th Oct. Curve. 8.00pm. Contact venue.

**Spooky Science:** Until 30th Oct. Space Centre.

**Kids' Halloween Trail:** 29-31st Oct. New Walk Mus.

**Ghost Walk:** 31st Oct. Newarke Houses Museum. 5.30pm. [www.visitleicester.info](http://www.visitleicester.info)

**Catherine Tate:** DeMont Hall. 4th Nov. 7.30pm.

**Abbey Park Firework Display:** 5th Nov. 5.30pm.

**The Man Who Would Be King:** 11-12 Nov. Upstairs At The Western. 7.30pm.

**Salt of The Earth Charity Sale:** 12 Nov. 11 Cooden Av, LE3 0JS. 2-5pm.

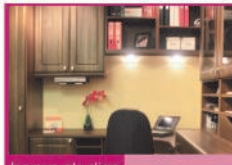
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## Could You Run Upstairs?

**Volunteer-led venue Upstairs at the Western is looking for a new team to take over the running of Leicester's only pub theatre.**

Developed and created in 2012, directors Verity Bartsch, Sally Jack and Gary Phillpott, together with a team of volunteers transformed an empty room above popular Steamin' Billy pub, The Western, into a successful, professional venue. With two seasons each year of theatre, comedy and spoken word in the heart of Leicester's West End, over 4,500 people have seen shows or taken part in workshops over the past eight seasons.

The directors of the community interest company are now looking for successors to continue to run and improve the theatre, and ensure that Upstairs at the Western remains a jewel in the Leicester West End community's crown.

Sally Jack said: "We feel we have gone as far as we can with the venue. Lives change and it is such a big commitment to maintain the standards we have set ourselves. Much as it feels like a big wrench at the moment, we hope to see



the venue thrive and flourish with a new team, whoever they may be. This is a great opportunity to develop the space - whether that is continuing to programme theatre, comedy, spoken word and music which all work so well, or to focus on a new direction but this will be something for the new team to embrace and develop".

The highlights for Sally have been: "...seeing the comedy work-shoppers overcome their fears and create and perform stand up routines to a paying audience has been great. Welcoming performers like Dave Bartram, Geoffrey Holland and Cathy Tyson to the venue has been thrilling and brilliant fun. Overall

though, my own satisfaction comes from sitting up at the back of the theatre, watching a show, the lights coming up once the performance has ended and hearing the audience talk about what they've just experienced. A shared experience".

With continued support from The Steamin' Billy Brewery, the departing directors hope that audiences will continue to walk Upstairs To The Western to be entertained and that the city's unique pub theatre will continue to firmly embed itself into the fabric of Leicester's West End. **Paul Towers**



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# Trackway To Motorway

**Most of us all know that historically Leicester was built where the River Soar could be forded and later, bridged.** The Romans drove their long distance route from the Devon coast across Britain to Holton-Beckering near Lincoln using this crossing point to establish the town of Ratae Corieltauvorum as a key point along what they called the Fosse Way.

Trackways had, however, existed in Britain long before the Romans arrived and it may well be that parts of the Fosse Way had existed as ancient trackways many centuries before.

Water transport had become important long before land travel to central areas of the country like Leicestershire became popular. Thus we can still trace the route of an ancient trackway leading out of Leicester, by way of what is now Scraftoft Lane, up over the Tilton plateau making its way to Stamford and the River Welland. In other parts of the county we also find traces of old pathways linking up with rivers such as the Wreake and the Soar.



Gartree Road, running south east out of the city towards the Welland, was certainly used by the Romans but is in reality a good bit older. Its route is not only traceable but still largely in use either as a road or pathway along almost its entire length.

Not quite as easy to trace is the road which the Romans used to link their town of Ratae Corieltauvorum to their fort near Mancetter on the Watling Street which we now know as the A5. This route passed through the vicinity of Glenfield and Ratby but the exact route is difficult to determine. We do know however that the forts along the stretch of border between current day Leicestershire and Warwickshire were well fortified. This was done in the aftermath of the famous rebellion of Queen Boadicea (or Boudicca) who met her end somewhere near Nuneaton.

High up on this border country, further to the south, we find High Cross, where the Fosse Way traverses Watling Street. In Roman times many regarded this point as the dead centre of England, though the commemorative monument there is of a much later date.

Today we live in the age of rapid road transport, yet Fosseway and Watling Street are still in use. The M1 and the M69 are entirely twentieth century creations but still follow in the cart ruts of those ancient trackways.

**Roger Blackmore**

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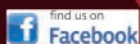


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*Autumn, as the poet said is: "the season of mellow fruitfulness". For Helen, it's the chance to relive her misspent youth and set fire to stuff...*

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I've made fire pits on beaches around the country and dodged the flying shards of hot flint that come flying out of them. I've made fire pits on campsites and dodged the bamboo sticks poked into them by excited children. I've never had a fire pit at home though. That changed recently. A Swedish fire pit has arrived in my back garden. It's a stainless steel monolith at first, but then the lid comes off and you fill it with logs and make fire! Those useful Swedes have ensured there is a grill top for it so you can mull your wine and toast anything that comes to hand without burning it!

It's all very sanitised and 21st century though. There is a bit of me that longs to stick a giant hunk of meat on a spit and roast it over a fire. You can buy spits that you have to sit all day and turn but I imagine the feast you have at the end of that day is amazing. There's something primal about a big

hunt of meat over a fire and it stirs my inner Wilma Flintstone. That said, I can probably live without it. I came home from a long trip recently and when I walked into the house I was immediately drawn through and out into the garden by the dancing flames. It was lit and waiting for me, there was hot chocolate and crumpets and it was perfect. Instead of staring at the television I stared into the fire like my cave dwelling ancestors and it was properly magical. Whether I still feel that way in the depths of winter when the ice is forming I don't know, but I do know that a day without fire is a day wasted.

**Helen Knott.**



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## PARKING CHAOS CONTINUES

**Western Park residents are fighting to reclaim their driveways following the opening of the new Christ The King Infants School on Glenfield Road.**

They say that since the school opened a year ago, the traffic at that end of Western Park is chaotic. The road is impassable twice a day, causing cars to back out onto the main road or be left parked in the central reservation and over residents drives. Both sides of Glenfield Road are affected.

The Letchworth/Glenfield Rd Traffic Action Group presented the findings of a local traffic survey to City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby. Their concern focus on the massive increase in cut through traffic as a result of the school and the rise in speed along Westfield Road and Letchworth Road. They felt it was "an accident waiting to happen".

The City Mayor Peter Soulsby agreed that the situation was dangerous and committed to making the whole area safer. The Highways team would look at some "quick fixes" and report back to residents with some traffic calming plans at a community meeting. The Traffic Action Group say: "Lots of data was



presented at the September meeting at Dovelands School which did not reflect the situation clearly. "It was stated that the area is a 'high priority' for traffic improvement measures. It would be fair to say that the meeting was disappointing for the lack of detail and consideration of the problems that exist and are urgent".

The Traffic Action Group remains positive and have met with Martin Fletcher, Head of Highways, to push for a satisfactory solution.

## GREAT ESCAPE!

**A pink balloon that was part of a West Leicestershire firm's birthday celebration has made a dramatic bid for freedom and escaped across the channel to Germany.**

Michael John Flooring on Narborough Road lost this particular prisoner from Leicester racecourse on 7<sup>th</sup> of August as they celebrated their 70th anniversary. They thought they had seen the last of it as it drifted off across the city.

A month later, they were amazed to receive an email from Thomas in North Germany who stumbled upon the balloon at the Westerheversand Lighthouse whilst out walking with his family.



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## Digging Castle Hill Country Park

The last two weeks in September saw the community excavations of the Knights Hospitaller's Preceptory at Beaumont Leys. The excavation was run by the University of Leicester on behalf of the Story of the Parks project and attracted amateur archaeologists from across the city.

Gazette reader and amateur local historian Robin Matthewman, from the Castle Hall Archaeology Project, said 'Our excavations have uncovered well preserved evidence of medieval buildings and yards. Large quantities of pottery suggest occupations of the 13th century which fits with the Knights Hospitallers. The finds have been fantastic compared with what was originally expected'.

The site comprises a ditched and banked enclosure containing the remains of a Preceptory, a monastic complex formerly belonging to the Knights Hospitaller, and buildings designed to provide for the knight's domestic and religious needs, including hospice accommodation for travellers and pilgrims. In later years, the site probably functioned as a monastic grange or sheep farm; the receipts from which funded the Knights Hospitaller's campaigns in the Holy Lands.

The site was in use from around 1240 until 1482 and later went on to become a deer park for the Kings of England before being sold off. It eventually was used by Leicester Water Board Corporation as a sewage works from 1891 and 1965. At 250

acres, it is probably the largest park in Leicester.



The excavation has found remnants of possibly two buildings which have been dismantled in later years when all the timber support beams were removed. Both of these seem to be lesser buildings but there are loads of roofing slates - and the nails to hold them on - dumped throughout the excavation. The success of finding this has delighted archaeologists as many thought it had all been destroyed by the sewage works.

It is hoped that this community excavation can be repeated next year so it further extends learning of this historic park.

If you haven't been, the park can be found in Beaumont Leys off Astill Lodge Rd and info about it can be found on the City Council's website.

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## Westival Plans Race Ahead

The Winter Westival 2016 organising team is beavering away preparing festive treats for the community around Braunstone Gate and beyond. The street festival will take place on Braunstone Gate, on the evening of Saturday 26th November inside venues, and on Sunday 27th November, 11 – 6pm on the street. The festive market stalls are booking up with local crafts people and more, the stage slots are almost full with local bands and performers, bars and restaurants are sparkling up their menus for the weekend, community groups are planning crafty activities for the kids, and the team has several other exciting treats up their sleeves!



Along with a fantastic group of local volunteers, many organisations are giving much needed organisational and financial support, and will be offering things on the day; here's just a taste: Tesco will be giving out free mince pies (as well as their car park), Natterjacks will be hosting the stage, Sports Pad will be offering free goes on their simulators, local churches will be carolling, and there's talk of a festive beer being brewed for the occasion! As well as this, there's behind-the-scenes support from The West End Brewery, Malcom Murphy Hair, Sus-trans, Leicester City Council and The People's Health Trust.

If you fancy helping out; having a stall, offering a performance or sponsorship, call Charlotte Jones on 07833 057 595. E: [leicesterwestival@gmail.com](mailto:leicesterwestival@gmail.com) or [facebook.com/winterwestival](https://www.facebook.com/winterwestival)



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# SAMHAIN

**Halloween; that time of year when the clocks  
turn back and the long dark nights are upon us.**

Across the world, and here in West Leicester  
(where we do it in style), many of us dress up as  
ghosts and ghouls to go trick or treating with our  
carved pumpkin lanterns, embracing all things  
spooky and dark. However, this festival was a sig-  
nificant time for our Celtic ancestors in Europe.



The Celts called this festival Samhain (Sow-in)  
meaning Summer's End and dates back at least  
6000 years. This was the Celtic New Year. Without  
conventional calendars, the falling leaves and first  
biting frosts were temporal markers. They heralded  
the end of summer's abundance and the beginning  
of lean times over the winter months.

At Samhain, the harvest would be in and the ani-  
mals herded into their winter shelters. With limited  
food, weaker beasts were slaughtered and the meat  
preserved to last until the return of spring. The war  
to survive was fought upon the battle ground of  
snow and ice. Death was ever present - the weak  
and old may not live to see the spring.

The Celts believed that at Samhain the veil be-  
tween the world of the living and the land of the  
dead was thin enough to cross. Therefore they  
could commune with their ancestral spirits to ask for  
guidance and advice to help through the dark times.

By the Mediaeval period this tradition changed from  
ancestor worship to demons roaming the streets  
and dressing up as them was a method of defence.  
This tied in with the tradition of mummung, where  
people travelled door to door performing short plays  
in return for food. This where the modern tradition of  
Halloween and trick or treating has its roots.

In these days of central heating, the winter is not  
the life and death struggle our ancestors endured.  
But the cycles of life continue. For many, now is the  
time to reflect on the achievements of the past year,  
let go of what is no longer needed or viable, honour  
our lost loved ones and embrace all that we have.  
Happy Celtic New Year!

**Chez**



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## Oct Police Update

As we enter autumn, we see our existing student community returning to the area and welcome our new 'freshers' students. We encourage you to visit Hinckley Road Police Station for any crime prevention advice and materials. We will be involved in events across the area to encourage crime prevention, safety advice and encourage respect of neighbours in relation to anti-social behaviour resulting from noise and drinking.

We continue to see an increase in thefts from vehicles, which includes opportunists spotting valuables such as satnavs, mobile phones and cash left on display in vehicles. Please ensure that when you leave your vehicle they are hidden from sight.

We are also aware of fuel being stolen from vehicles and urge residents to be vigilant and take any measures to prevent perpetrators having easy access to fuel tanks.

Burglaries are still occurring and very often these are as a result of windows being left open and insecure. Do not leave your premises open to criminals breaking into your homes and secure your windows.



Excellent work by our own PCSO 6859 Kate Needham last week after she spotted a prolific thief whilst out on patrol. Kate took details including clothing before seeing a reported burglary in the area the following day. She recognised the described suspect to be the aforementioned thief, which subsequently lead to a charge of burglary.

A big thank you to all who came along to watch the police suffer three successive losses at the wheelchair rugby game against the Leicester Tigers squad. Around £700 was raised and the event was a huge success.

Finally, PS 315 Chris Brown, who is the Westcotes Ward Dedicated Neighbourhood Team Sergeant, is transferring to Euston Street Police Station to the role of custody Sergeant. We thank Chris for all his hard work on the area and he will be missed.

PS1743 Darren Cramp will be taking over as Westcotes Ward Sergeant and will be working from Hinckley Road Police Station. For all information on your local policing teams then visit our force website.

**Sgt Mike Hooper**



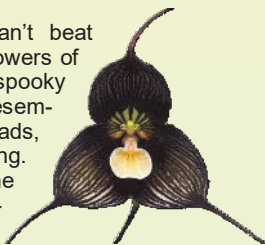
## Tony Huxley's Compost Corner



**Autumn has sneaked up on us.**

**Misty mornings, longer nights and a chill in the air mean Halloween is just around the corner.** Soon there'll be pumpkins to carve. Jack-o-lanterns were an Irish tradition, carved from a potato or turnip. When hundreds of thousands of Irish emigrated to America during the famine, they discovered the native pumpkins were a much better medium for ghoulish sculptures. Personally, I find these bulbous orange fruits quite jolly. But if you're after botanical frights where else might you look?

For creepiness you can't beat *Dracula vampira*. The flowers of this orchid look like spooky faces! Some varieties resemble fluffy monkey heads, and are just as disturbing. A true floral vamp is the Batflower, *Tacca chantrieri*. This amazing black, be-whiskered flower looks like it may well swoop down for a midnight snack. It's a difficult houseplant to grow



but worth the effort.

"The Little Shop of Horrors" did much to boost Venus fly-trap sales. Just as creepy is the Cobra lily. It's easy to envisage these pitcher-pot plants as hooded snakes about to strike, complete with forked tongue. They tempt in insects which drown in the plant's digestive juices and are slowly consumed.

For horrific beauty, Wolfsbane takes some beating. Hooded blue flowers coyly disguise a lethal toxin that's present throughout the plant. It's an ancient plant poison so toxic it became known as The Queen of Poisons. It may also protect you against Werewolves, if it doesn't kill you first!

Plants not only know the look of fear but also the smell. Like the Voodoo lily or the charmingly named "Corpse Flower" *Rafflesia arnoldii*, a parasitic plant with the largest flowers in the world. They choose flies as their pollinators, enticing them in with the perfume of rotting flesh!

But on a misty Autumn evening, as the night creeps in, nothing unnerves me more than the ghostly silhouette of the pendulous conifer *Chamaecyparis nootakatensis*. A dark and foreboding presence, like the "Dementers" so feared by Harry Potter. Menacingly looming over you, it could be about to slowly suck out your very soul! Happy Halloween!

**Tony Huxley**



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# Martin Page

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