



## DOOMED TREES FACE AXE



More on page 4



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## Hello From The Editor

Welcome to the June edition of the Gazette. This month or so has not been a barrel of laughs as the computers and software at Gazette Towers were updated and upgraded. Unbelievably fiddly and time consuming - and many thanks to local PC genius Mark from virtualventure.co.uk for sorting the mess out! Then we discovered that the lockdown will continue until at least the 19th of July... oh great joy.

This month we lead with the terrible fate of 108 trees on Western Park. We featured the possibility that some of the 100 year old trees were suffering from canker in the April Gazette, but we really had no idea how bad it really was until a proper tree survey was done. It's a tragedy and it could effect more than just our local parks.

Regular features continue with Helen Knott doing a bit of skinny dipping, Tony Shelly discovering the architect behind some of Leicestershire's historic churches. Carey Tunstall has a June gardening update, there's the latest policing news from Ed Jones and the Braintazers lurk on the back page.

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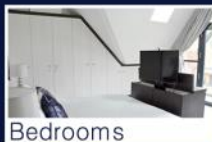


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## DOOMED TREES FACE AXE

**108 trees in Western Park will have to be chopped down after becoming infected with terminal diseases.**

35 of the trees lining the main drive and 20 more elsewhere in the park will have to be removed to try to contain the spread of a highly infectious disease called *Phytophthora* and prevent it from infecting the other trees in the park.

The disease attacks the tree's vascular system and eventually kills it, infecting its roots and spreading to neighbouring trees. Large bleeding cankers on the tree show that *Phytophthora* has taken hold.

Head of parks and open spaces Stewart Doughty said: "This is a particularly nasty disease which has been around for years but which now appears to be progressing much more quickly.

"This faster progression may be a result of our milder winters incubating the disease, but we're also dealing with new pathogens that have arrived in the British Isles comparatively recently.

"There is no cure for *Phytophthora*, but normally you can minimise the risk of disease transmission by



removing the infected tree. When the diseased trees are close together in clusters, and their roots are intertwined – as they are in Western Park – you have no option but to remove multiple trees to try to stop the disease from Spreading. By removing them, we hope to save the rest of the trees in the drive that have probably stood here since the park was first laid out 120 years ago.

The city council will also have to remove five ash trees as a result of *ash dieback* – a chronic fungal disease that's already killed a large proportion of the ash trees in the UK and Europe.

*Phytophthora* is not the only pathogen in the park. *Red Band Needle Blight* has affected 48 pine trees, which will all need to be felled to minimise the spread of the disease to other pines in the city.

The list of affected trees, so far, includes 48 pine, 26 lime, 14 poplar, 6 sycamore, 5 ash, 3 maple, 3 oak, 1 cherry, 1 alder and 1 cypress.

The council will remove 60 trees – including those in the main drive – at the end of this summer, and will plant the replacements in the autumn/winter. Mr Doughty said: "While a new tree can't replace one that's been growing for more than 100 years, we will do our best to compensate for the loss. We'll plant new semi-mature trees along the avenue this winter and will make sure that more than one replacement is planted in the park for every tree that's lost."

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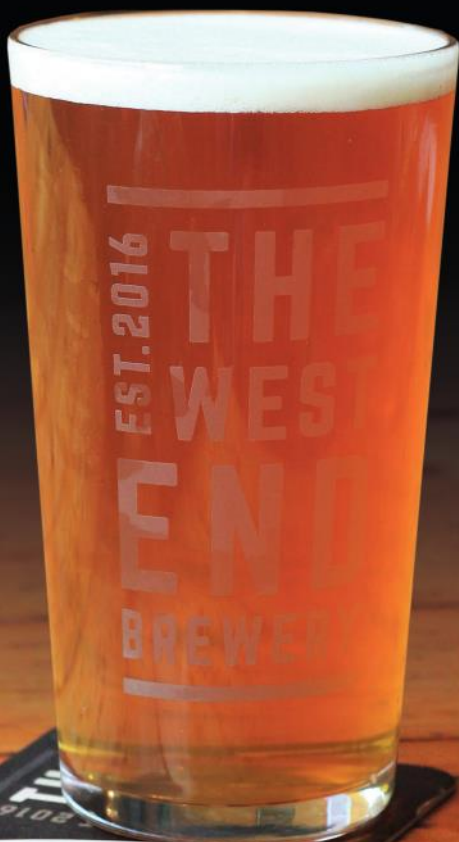
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# Update

[wwce.org.uk](http://wwce.org.uk)

**WWCE's Project Hive is run by local residents who are raising funds to redevelop the old Eco House on Western Park into a community space.**

Looking back through our diaries we have noticed that Project Hive has just reached a significant milestone. It was five years ago this month in June 2016 that Leicester City Council put two plots of brownfield land on the fringes of Western Park up for sale.

As local residents, we wanted to ensure that our community received some benefit from the loss of these cherished, well known, respected facilities and the land that they stood on as they came into private hands. Therefore we formed the Western Ward Community Enterprise (WWCE).

Many of the faces involved in the cause have changed in the five years since. There have been low points when we have all felt progress has ground to a halt as well as highs when we have seen just how much the community has backed us to reach our project targets.

We hope it won't take another five years to deliver physical results on the commitment we all made to deliver new places for the community to come together, especially after the last year.

## Petanque on The Park

Earlier this month, Leicester Petanque Club held its long-awaited Opening Day, welcoming friends old and new to the new club in the heart of Western Park.

On a gloriously sunny evening, visitors of all ages and abilities turned up, from families with young children through to seasoned veterans of the game.

Playing equipment was available for people who needed it, and some impromptu coaching sessions were held on the piste to help new players try their hand at the game!

The Opening Day was the culmination of months of hard work from John, Michelle and Allan who, using 345 tonnes of stone, concrete and gravel managed to construct the playing area themselves, without the aid of external contractors.

Their efforts were rewarded with a really enthusiastic turnout, and the club has generated a real interest in membership within the local community. So far, nearly 65% of all the club's 70 members hail from West Leicester. More information about the club on their Facebook page and at [www.leicesterpc.co.uk](http://www.leicesterpc.co.uk)



## HOMeward BOUND

**Local Leicester lad David Edwards and his young family are looking for a family home in Western Park.**

The pandemic has made many people reconsider their priorities. When David and Ruth asked their children what they wanted once it was over, both boys had the same answer "We just want to be with our family again."

This simple plea from their sons aged eight and four has seen the family make a lot of life changes to move down to Leicester, where David grew up and his parents and sister still live.

Despite both parents securing new jobs in the area, there's one vital piece of the puzzle still missing, they need a family home in Western Park.

The Edwards family currently live in Hazel Grove, Greater Manchester. As key workers during the pandemic, they both found themselves working longer hours. "As a senior manager in the NHS I was working 60-70-hour weeks," said Ruth "I loved my job but it just wasn't fair on the boys."

It didn't take the couple too long to find new jobs in Leicester. "Our house sold within days of going on the market, it felt too good to be true. Little did we know that buying a home in Western Park was actually going to be our greatest challenge".

The family have spent the last eight weekends driving down to Leicester to view houses. "It's hard when you're looking for a house at a distance, we've missed some really great properties because we can't view them fast enough and someone pips us to the post" says Ruth.

The family are now taking matters into their own hands. They're inviting anyone in the Western Park area who has been thinking about selling their home to get in touch, selling either solicitor to solicitor or via an estate agent - whatever you're most comfortable with.

The Edwards are looking for either a detached family home with a minimum of 3 beds and a generous garden, or one of Western Parks larger 1930s semi-detached homes that are joined garage to garage.

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# KNOTT'S LANDING

**When I was a child there were regular crazes at school.** I remember the one for jacks involving little metal tank defences and a bouncy ball and we did double-dutch skipping. More recently my son lived through fidget spinners and loom bands (they still cause me to twitch when I think of them). You think you will out-grow that sort of thing when you reach the dizzy heights of middle age but it turns out that's not quite true. The crazes require adequate funds but they are still just that – a herd rush to participate in an activity.

This year's craze is wild swimming, especially amongst ladies of a certain age. The internet is awash with pictures of people in brightly coloured hats bobbing happily in rivers and lakes all over the UK surrounded by verdant woodland. Like wrinkly swans they glide through sparkling water with broad smiles. Cheerfully they smash



through the ice build-up in front of them while maintaining a steady breast stroke. As stately as a galleon they plough through the waves. These matriarchs of the water are glorious in their stoic resolution to get into freezing water and swim. Their insistence on healthy outdoor activity in all weather conditions borders on psychopathic and brings to mind all those Victorian health cures that were anything but healthy.

Open water swimming is a gentle affair. No florid displays of butterfly or fast front crawl here. 'Swimbling' is almost exclusively female territory. Occasionally a man will be seen in their midst and he is welcomed but men seem far too competitive. They are either desperate for a Wim Hoff style cold dip to shrink their knackers to the size of walnuts or they want to swim at speed and fight off an alligator. Either way they are unlikely to be as enthusiastic about the obligatory tea and cake at the end of a swim.

In the age where image is king it does all look fabulous and I can reveal that it is lovely swimming in silky river water. The stinging cold of the sea seems to be less onerous when lying back in the sunshine bobbing around. Like anything though, reality bites. If you were thinking of taking it up, look up swimmers itch and duck fleas.

Not put off yet? I'll see you in the Soar.

*Helen Knott*



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# LETTER BOX

Email in response to P.T.'s letter about speed calming measures.



I am delighted that the residents of Letchworth Road and surrounding Western Park avenues are enjoying the timely introduction of the speed humps and the tranquil calming measures they produce. Over in Westcotes, The West End, we would kill for even the potholes you mention to calm the recent increased flow of speeding, dangerous traffic up our side roads. Roads like Dunster Avenue and Dulverton Road to mention just two. This additional traffic, along with the three recent awful crashes outside the Hinckley Road shops have been generated by a combination of two mad ideas. The first driven by our myopic mayor, who somehow is seeing more people on bicycles than we do and secondly the manic campaigning by the self interests of certain vocal individuals, who are using their influence to see what happens when you stop traffic entering Westcotes Drive off Hinckley Road. I can tell them, multiple crashes, huge amounts of fast traffic pouring down the side roads, the endangerment of residents, regular parked vehicle damage, stand offs, road rage, punch ups, delays to emergency vehicle access, bin lorries, deliveries and an increase in locals moving out. Why on earth the Western Park speed hump campaign or 20 MPH restrictions haven't been introduced down these roads is beyond stupid. PT can we have your spare pot holes please in the

absence of common sense being deployed over here, before someone is killed.

**Westcotes Resident**

Council adopted: "a slow and cautious approach" to opening its leisure facilities with centres opened for general swimming and racket sports on the 21<sup>st</sup> June. Restrictions in England were relaxed on the 12<sup>th</sup> April allowing them to restart.

A regular squash and badminton player myself, I found alternative venues for my medically advised exercise. Some of my fellow participants, one who had a heart attack in his forties, one who weighs 20 stone and another who has high blood pressure have swung their racket again... others have not.

Some of my Friday night New Parks Leisure Centre opponents play for keeps, the squash club boasts four county league teams and has coaches who have trained at England Squash. New Parks is not scheduled to reopen until, at the earliest mid September, and I contemplate the landing-place of those who might consider the squash itself rather than its health benefits the most important aspect of the game.

One might imagine the super fit competitors at a squash club being complacent about the dangers of COVID. How could they be when one of their members, Tony Gershlick a pioneering cardiologist at Glenfield Hospital, succumbed to COVID in November 2020? I picture a pre-pandemic scene with Tony encouraging one of his heart patients to take more exercise and I wonder what he might think.

**M.C**

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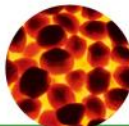
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On the 10th of June the Leicester University Chamber Choir performed at St. Anne's Church; their first public performance since March 2020.

Amateur singers were restricted to six indoors, the first part of the concert consisted of a number of solos, duets, quartets and sextets to showcase the various singers with pieces ranging from Gabriel Faure to Flanders and Swann via Sir Hubert Parry and a specially-adapted excerpt from "The Book of Mormon".



After a number of thanks to those leaving the choir and a presentation of £500 to the choir's Treasurer by Revd. Liz Wilson, Vicar of St. Anne's, the choir and audience went outside into the church grounds to enjoy a fine evening and a further four items, this time by the full choir. This concluded with a version of the recent Tik-Tok hit "The Wellerman".

Thanks go to the choir and its Musical Director Roxanne Gull for a wonderful occasion and we look forward to welcoming them for a Christmas Concert in December. **Johnathan Varley**



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## Western Park Open Gardens

Over a sunny June weekend, houses in Western Park opened their gardens to the public, an event which happens every two years.

There was a wide choice of gardens ranging from romantic, mature and wildlife friendly cottage-gardens to traditional gardens with lawns, colourful shrubs, fruit trees and vines. Also gardens with vegetable plots, mature trees, ponds and so on. A veritable smorgasbord of gardens, large medium and small! Some gardens opened just on Saturday, some only on Sunday and the highest number on both days.



The event was held by St Anne's church, Letchworth Area Neighbourhood Watch, and Project Hive. It must be said that the weather played into their hands and provided the perfect backdrop to the weekend.

Refreshments were provided at St Anne's Community Hall by a team of Project Hive workers and a great big thank you is due to them and especially to all their fantastic young helpers who provided a waiter/waitress service to all the customers. The cakes were delicious, the vast majority being homemade. A large plant stall was also provided. Thanks are also due to St Anne's for letting the organizers be based at the hall, a central point for all the gardens.

There were quizzes for the children and prizes to be won. The weekend rounded off with an outdoor service in the gardens at St Anne's where being outside enabled people to sing for a change. **Geoff Pollard**



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## **LEICESTERHIRE'S CHURCH BUILDER**

In the village of Copt Oak, South Charnwood stands St. Peter's Church, which has been described as 'sombre in character'. I've always found it quite a peaceful and delightful place to visit, despite the constant noise of the nearby motorway. This intense, granite structure was designed and built by William Railton in 1837, the same architect who also built Nelson's Column in London.



This cathedral-like building was one of several commissions taken on by Railton, the others being a new chapel at St. Bernard's Abbey, later pulled down and replaced by a larger building designed by Augustus Pugin, and churches in Woodhouse Eves, Groby, and Thorpe Acre.

In 1845, he designed Beaumanor Hall for the Herrick family, and between 1843 and 1847, he constructed the gatehouse and lodges for Garendon Park, all of which survived the eventual destruction of the main house. Railton went on to be employed widely throughout his life, with his designs for Holy Trinity in Hoxton, the redesign of Riseholme Hall, just over the border in Lincolnshire, Holy Trinity in Meanwood, Yorkshire and many more throughout England.

The simplicity of his designs, and his use of local materials in most of his structures, are what I personally admire about his work ethic. St. Peter's is my favourite country church, viewed from either close-up or at distance, the sheer quality of the work is there for all to see. William Railton built nothing after Meanwood in 1848-9. and settled at number 65 Onslow Square, Kensington, London. In October 1877, he fell ill and died in Brighton, he was 77.

**Tony Shelley**



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**June Police Update**

"To be or not to be, that is the question? - For success at the UEFA European Championships, hope springs eternal, but alas, we now know we have to wait until July 19<sup>th</sup> for the lockdown restrictions to be lifted. We know that there is a time lag between infection rates, hospital admissions and deaths. Daily Infection rates are rising, so too are hospital admissions. How much they increase, and how this translates into Covid deaths, only time will tell. As the country charges forward with the vaccination program, I sincerely hope and pray that the impact of the new variant will be minimal. The key message though is to keep to the rules, follow the advice, get vaccinated if you have not done so, and get tested often. We need to be cautious with this virus, and four more weeks may make a huge difference in saving lives across the city and county.

As part of the 'County Lines intensification week', your teams were out and about targeting drugs gangs. The week saw thirty seven arrests, the recovery of drugs, firearms, cash, and stolen property, as officers sought to disrupt the drug networks operating across the force. Your teams enforced upon so called trap houses, safeguarding a number of vulnerable children and adults. These individuals are often exploited by criminal gangs, coerced into taking all the risks whilst they reap the profits. Often ensnared through debt bondage or through the lure of easy money, these vulnerable people find themselves on a spiral path that they cannot escape from. The lockdown has served to frustrate this practice, as young people could no longer blend into the crowd on busy trains and coaches, but as the economy opens up, these behaviours will return. We have forged strong intelligence networks with other policing areas enabling us to enforce modern slavery and trafficking laws against dealers who target our children and vulnerable adults.

Your teams have also been busy enforcing against so called cannabis factories, most recently three in one day! Two out of three were successful, persons have been charged and imprisoned plus a measurable chunk of profit removed from the pockets of the criminals. I often find copies of the Gazette at these properties and wonder whether the criminals ever read them. In the event that they do peruse its pages then to them I say, "We will not stop until you do."

We rely on the information provided by the public to help us protect the exploited and to enforce against the criminals. Please continue to report issues either through our online portal, by ringing 101 or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. We regularly update our Neighbourhood link with information about the latest crime threats, so if you have not already done so I would urge you to sign up. As always, keep yourself safe, and be a good neighbour.

**Sgt Ed Jones**



# CAREY'S COMPOST CORNER



**There is still time to sow French beans and, after a difficult Spring, I think now is the best time to sow as the soil is nicely warmed up and French beans are unable to tolerate frost or cold temperatures.** French

beans come in dwarf or climbing varieties - I prefer climbing as you can get good crops off them well into September, whereas the dwarf grow quicker, but you only get a few weeks of cropping. I will also do a successional sowing to prolong the harvest.

I've been earthing up my potatoes, which ensures that higher growing tubers don't turn green. First earlies are ready to harvest after the plant has started to flower (around 10 weeks from initial planting) and maincrops shouldn't be harvested until the stems and leaves wither, which allows



setting of the potato skin. I was able to harvest my garlic as the leaves turned yellow and withered.

A difficult task I have to tackle this month is removing duckweed from my pond. This will enable the frogs and plants room to breathe - if you don't remove every single piece it quickly starts to multiply again! I lay all that I remove at the side of the pond overnight so that any hidden critters can easily access the pond again and then add it to my compost bin the following morning. Talking of which, compost bin contents should be turned each month, as this improves aeration and in turn helps with the breakdown of organic matter.

Additionally, I've been lifting and dividing my bluebells and snowdrops; this is easy to do, just make sure the leaves have gone yellow! I have been providing stake supports for my tall flowering plants and I will be giving my aubretias a hard prune if they are straggly and tatty with brown centres. Doing this gives a surge of new growth, but otherwise they will be treated to a light trim to retain their shape.

I'm also moving my birdbath to a more accessible space, along with my bee bath. This is simply a pot saucer filled with marbles and water. This provides a drinking station without risk of them drowning when they are tired after a hard day's work - after all, bees get thirsty too!

**Carey Tunstall**

## Martin Page

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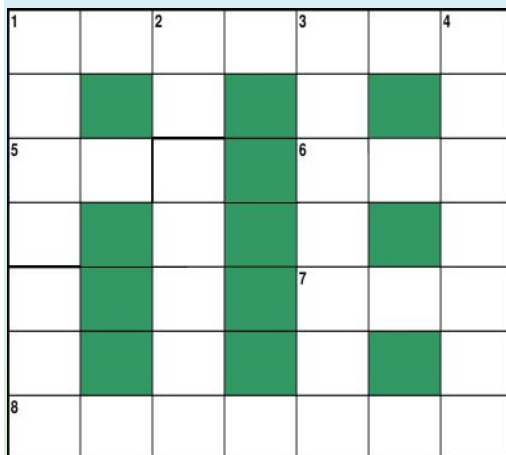
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