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News & Views for Western Park • Westcotes • The Fosse



PRINCE CHARLES VISITS NARBOROUGH RD

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Hello From The Editor

Welcome to February's Western Park Gazette and in this edition...

Although it's been a rather quiet few weeks we did have a visit from HRH Prince Charles. He visited Leicester and took a wander down Narborough Road after he dropped into Westcotes Library, the organisers of the Western Park Beer Festival have opened their own brewery and are busily selling their ale to pubs across Leicester as well as working on their own pop-up beer festival in March.

Tony Huxley's green fingers tickle the parts other gardening columns fail to reach, Roger Blackmore goes for a ramble in the bramble, local amateur archaeologist Robin Mathewman heads to a city centre archaeological dig, Helen Knott rages at trendy modern banks and we have the latest update from Hinckley Road Police.

If you have a dark sense of humour, we've teamed up with Curve to offer a pair of tickets to the first night of Joe Orton's What the Butler Saw at Curve.

And to exercise the little grey cells there's the horrendously difficult Sudoku and crossword on the inside back cover.

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Events Diary

Peter Crebbin's Cool Swing Band: 1st Sun Monthly. at the 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.

Coffee Mornings: Fridays 10-12noon. St. Anne's Hall.

Pub Quiz: Last Tues of the month. West End Brewery Braunstone Gate. 8-10pm.

Mike & The Mechanics: 23rd Feb DMH. 7.30pm

Brendan Cole: 24th Feb. DMH. 7.30pm.

Tea with Oscar: 24th Feb. Guildhall. 8pm.

Fatback Band Live: 25th Feb. Music café, New Parks Street off Braunstone Gate. 7.00pm.

Sunidhi Chauhan: 26th Feb. DMH. 7.00pm.

Time & Again: 27th Feb-4th March. Little Th. 7.30pm

Highly Strung: 2nd March. WE Brewery. 8.00pm.

Oklahoma!: 7th-11th March. Little Theatre. 7.30pm.

The Full Monty: 6-11th March. DMH.

Pop-up Pub: 17th March. St. Anne's Hall, Letchworth Road. 5pm-midnight. Over 18's only.

Find the Right Words: 17th March. Upstairs at The Western. Workshop from 6.30pm. Show 7.30pm.

What the Butler Saw: 3-18 March. Curve. 7.30pm

Uncle Armando (Comedy): 20th March. Upstairs at The Western. 7.30pm.

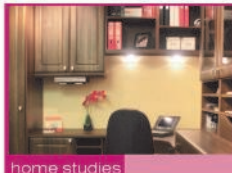
Leicester Comedy Fest: Until 28th Feb at city venues. See website www.comedy-festival.co.uk

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Prince Charles Visits

Prince Charles took an unannounced stroll up Narborough Road on 25th January to meet local traders after visiting the community hub at Westcotes Library.

As part of His Royal Highness's scheduled visit to Leicester he met local business owners in the library who presented him with a hamper containing some of the produce available on Narborough Road. He also met members of the British Asian Trust, local faith groups, library staff and representatives of two community groups, Toddler Time and the English Conversation Group which meet at the library.



He then headed off for a quick meet and greet tour of Narborough Road, accompanied by MP Liz Kendall and Sir Peter Soulsby; gathering a media scrum and a crowd of onlookers on the way.

Prince Charles was in Leicestershire on a four hour visit to the City of Leicester College, St. Philip's Church and Montsorrel Railway.

In 2016, Narborough Road was named the most multi-cultural street in the UK following research by the London School of Economics.

Subsequently dubbed "a United Nations of shopkeepers", the street features more than 200 shops and represents at least 23 nationalities.

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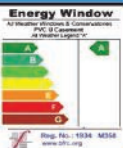
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Ramble in the Bramble

A hundred and thirty years ago, in 1887 Britain was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. Here in Leicester, in that Golden Jubilee year, a group of keen ramblers got together to form the Leicestershire Footpaths Association.

Today that Association is still going strong with 340 individuals and some 40 parish councils affiliated to the organisation. These days regular walking groups meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, with a Saturday Group undertaking longer walks of 8 to 12 miles.

The groups do an important job of noting obstructions to footpaths, monitoring waymaking and signage, keeping an eye generally on local footpaths and feeding their views in to local councils.

One of their most significant achievements and one which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year is the hundred-mile long Leicestershire Round.

This circular walk around the county was designed to take in as many of our local beauty spots and places of interest as possible.

Thus it is routed through Bradgate Park, Shakerstone Railway Centre, Foxton Locks and the Langtons as well as a small stretch of Rutland.

The Guide Book to the Leicestershire Round is being re-published this year and the Footpaths Association is carefully monitoring the whole route and, where necessary, bringing it up to date.

Obviously things have changed since the days of Queen Victoria's Jubilee and the Association now has its own website which recorded 42000 hits last year.

Roger Blackmore



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KNOTT'S LANDING

Going to the bank used to be a relatively pleasant thing to do. You would walk into a warm room, stand in a queue to talk to a person behind a glass screen and then if there was a problem or you needed to discuss something you would be ushered into a little room.

It's not pleasant any more. It's changed. Internet banking? The High Street? The desire for profits over the customer experience? Probably all three.

I had cause to visit a city centre bank recently and discovered a fresh hell that adds a whole new level to Dante's Inferno. I walked into a largely empty room. In the centre stood a woman with a clipboard and the dead eyes of someone who really needs a sit down with a cup of tea. Disinterested and brusque she greeted everyone, asked what they needed, wrote their name down with a time and directed them to sit on a banquette or go upstairs in a mysterious lift that only business people and the rich can use.

I sat and waited dutifully as bright young things in grey uniforms, barely distinguishable from normal people, whizzed about with iPads slung across their

fronts 'helping people'. This works if you are a man or if you are a woman with no boobs. If you have boobs, this is a degrading, hideous experience which provides comedy for all around as you struggle to rest the iPad on the boobs and search for whatever mysterious bit of info you need from the internet.

Bizarrely the bank has its own radio show which was clearly being done by Phil from Investments who has never read a news bulletin in his life. I heard two while I waited so I can attest to the amateur performance and the odd music choice. A sort of dad rock mix that added to the sense of chaos.

Into this maelstrom walked an older couple. Hand in hand, she had a stick to help her walk, he wore a cap and his good coat. They made their way to the dead eyed woman, she sent them to the chairs, which were not a good height for older people, and they sat, clearly a bit bewildered by the set up. It was all a bit too public, no whispers, no privacy, no comfort zone. I'm not sure if they got what they needed, I hope they did. I hope they were treated kindly and gently by the staff, but I doubt it. The environment was against them.

I was quickly 'dealt with' by a hot-desking wunderkind and sent on my way. I am sure though, that the old couple, and every single customer in that bank would have much preferred a person behind a glass window and a few roaming managers to help out. I'm all for progress, but that felt so far from banking it was unrecognisable.

I won't be going back any time soon. *Helen Knott*



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BEER WE GO!

Last year the West End Brewery opened Leicester's first brewpub on Braunstone Gate and now beer lovers are welcoming the arrival of Leicester city centre's first craft brewery.

Framework Brewery poured their first pint, a hoppy American pale ale, on December 6. Since then an evolving stable of 'hop-forward' beers has followed; there's been Simcoe Stout, Centennial Rye and American Amber among others.

Two of Framework Brewery's five directors, Johnathan Briggs and Matt Mabe live in Western Park and help organise the Western Park Beer Festival. They say feedback from pubs and customers has been "very, very encouraging".

The brewery, in Friday Street, takes its name from the city and county's renowned textile trade – a deferential nod to the framework knitters. The theme continues with each brew being anointed a unique pattern number.

City pubs The Criterion, Brood@ Vin Quatre, West End Brewery, Blue Boar, Swan and Rushes, The Exchange, The Charlotte and The Real Ale Classroom are stocking their brews.

For the brewery's strategy director, Jim Willis, setting up Framework was an exercise in civic pride rather than a conscious business decision.

"Apart from the obvious love of beer, Framework was born because a city the size of Leicester doesn't have a brewery in the city centre," he says. "It's such an exciting time for Leicester, there are so many new people, businesses, and tourists coming to the city, and we thought that somebody needed to fill that beer gap and so we did."

Framework's brews are also vegan and vegetarian friendly as they don't use finings, made from fish guts, to remove cloudiness or 'haze', explains director Mat Mabe.

"We couldn't see the sense in excluding a significant portion of our potential market," says Mat. "We want our beers to be enjoyed by everyone and so, instead, we embrace the haze."

Framework's handcrafted beers will be on sale at the Western Park Pop Up Pub, in aid of Loros, taking place at The Hall at St Anne's on Friday, March 17 from 5pm to midnight. (Over 18's)




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See What the Butler Saw

Leicester playwright Joe Orton's explosive and provocative 1960's black farce 'What the Butler Saw' equally outraged and amused audiences of the day.

Now considered to be one of Orton's best works, this iconic piece of British theatre, starring Rufus Hound as Doctor Prentis and Dakota Blue Richards as Geraldine, plays to Orton's home city at Curve from 3rd-18th March.

To win a pair of first night tickets just answer the question below:

Which one of these is NOT a Joe Orton play:

A: Loot

B: Entertaining Mr Sloane

C: Blyth Spirit

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The Gazette's pet amateur archaeologist, Robin Mathewman picked up his shovel and headed off to an important city centre dig...

Unearthing The Past

Well, I've gone a roving and managed to volunteer with the archaeologists from Leicester University at the All Saints Brewery site at the corner of Highcross Street and Vaughan Way.

The excavation is being undertaken ahead of plans to build on the area and we are currently searching for what lies beneath.

So far the site has yielded some interesting features. We have found two 40m Sq. Roman town houses and courtyards, a large roman cellar, a Roman street and various mosaics (or bits of). Unfortunately the site has been systematically dug through for gravel during the medieval period, making shifting through the debris hard work.

The mosaic is only about the fourth found in Leicester. It is very geometrical in design with no fine picture but there are more flooring layers underneath this indicating continued home improvements. Attempts are being made to lift the mosaic but, so far, weather conditions are thwarting it.

We have unearthed some nice pieces of pottery – especially necks and spouts of pots and half a dozen coins, all coming from varying Roman dates.



The continuation of a street found in a previous excavations was discovered running alongside the boundary wall to the church and a trench will be opened up to run parallel to Highcross street.

This has the potential for being interesting as finds where supposedly made in the 18th century. It was also the site of the old St John's Hospital in medieval times, although this is expected to be just outside of the dig in the corner of Highcross Street/Vaughan Way, and the city and county jails before they moved in the late 1820s.

Robin Mathewman

Read Robin's full report of the discoveries on the Gazette's website www.westernparkgazette.co.uk

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School's Top Gardening Award

Doveland's on Hinckley Road is the first primary school in Leicester to be awarded the converted Royal Horticulture Society Level 5 Award.

Nationally there are nearly 30,000 schools and youth organisations signed up to the scheme. Only 1% has managed to reach level 5. Head teacher Sarah McCadam said "Doveland's are very proud to be up there with those high achievers."

To pass the level 5 the children have worked hard all last year on a project about hedgehogs. It started with an idea from a then year 6 pupil, Daisy, who just wanted to share her knowledge of the endangered hedgehog with her class mates. The project studied the animals diet, nocturnal and hibernating habits, the problems faced by traffic, litter and blue slug pellets. The school garden was made hedgehog friendly and children spread the word by postcards written to friends and family. Each class made clay hedgehogs which were sold for 50p each raising enough money to sponsor 7 hedgehogs for the school.

Christine Holton & Melanie Hodgson



The Gazette is always interested in what our local schools are doing. If they have an interesting project or achieved something special then tell us and shout about it to West Leicester!

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Feb Police Update

A very busy start to the year and as we moved into February this appears to be a continuing trend.

As you may have seen in the press, the Leicestershire Police Federation are highlighting the demand currently being placed on the police. We, as the West Leicester Neighbourhood Police Area, will continue to provide our residents with the best service that we can. However, please appreciate that we work shifts and that your specific Dedicated Neighbourhood Officer may not always be on duty. In an emergency contact 999, for live less urgent incidents or to pass on a message use 101. You can access an officer's voicemail and leave them a message if you know their collar number.

Incidents of note include a recent successful drugs warrant at St. Clement's Court flats on Comet Close at the top of Stephenson's Drive on Monday 9th January. Following reports of drug dealing from the flats, we conducted a raid and three males were detained, two of which were subsequently arrested and are currently on bail. We continue to monitor the area with patrols and visits. We encourage anyone with information to contact us.

In response to an emerging burglary series, we increased patrols around Wyngate Drive, Petworth Drive and Henley Road. As a result a person we suspect to be responsible was spotted and caught fleeing the scene of a recent burglary in possession of property from the targeted home. He has been charged and remanded into custody. Since the arrest there have had no further burglaries in this area.

As our communities diversify, we have had to adapt to accommodate residents from different countries and cultures. We are currently hosting a Senior officer from Romania, with the equivalent rank of Superintendent, who has been out on the area with PS 1743 Cramp from Hinckley Road Police Station, where they have been visiting numerous key sites to engage with the relevant communities. This has improved our engagement and information gathering in order to progress how we work with these hard to reach individuals. We would like to work with people from all countries and backgrounds; and so I would ask if you would be interested in helping us that you look at our 'Volunteers in Policing' schemes, on the police website. One such example is applying to join the Special Constabulary who have the same powers as a regular police officer but devote their spare time to complete voluntary work for the police. We have found officers from different backgrounds can help engage with their communities as representatives of the police.

Sgt Mike Hooper

Tony Huxley's Compost Corner



I'm often surprised how well plants cope with gardeners' attempts to mould them. But few respond as enthusiastically to shaping as the humble box plant, *Buxus sempervirens*. It's often the green brickwork holding together the formal planting of both stately homes and handkerchief gardens alike.

Box is happy forming knot gardens, geometric topiary shapes and even trees. Left to its own devices, it can attain heights of up to ten metres. But that requires a lot of leaving! I recently cut down a box tree that was about five metres tall.



The wood is creamy colour (it was sometimes used as a substitute for ivory) and it has faint growth rings. Gauging its age isn't easy but that specimen was at least 158 years old, pre-dating the American Civil War! And I've heard of specimens more than twice that age.

Box timber is highly sought after. It's turned into skittles, tools and handles, for musical instruments like recorders, bagpipes and in violin pegs. It's suitable for fine carving like chess pieces and decorative box work, hence the common name.

It's easy to create your own Box hedge. It tolerates most conditions, except heavy poorly-drained soil. This time of year, plants can be bought quite cheaply as bare root specimens. Allow up to 30cm between plants. For the smallest, most compact hedges, choose *B. microphylla* or *B. "suffruticosa"*. These can be planted just 15cms apart.

Unfortunately Box hedges are not free from pest and disease. Make sure you clear fallen box leaves to prevent the spread of a nasty fungal disease called box blight, which can wipe out a whole hedge. Spider mite and scale bugs can also be problem. In recent years the Box tree moth has arrived on our shores. Watch out for webs containing black, white and yellow grubs.

Superstition has it that surrounding your herbs with Box hedging will protect them from thieving witches, a very important consideration in 21st Britain!



Martin Page

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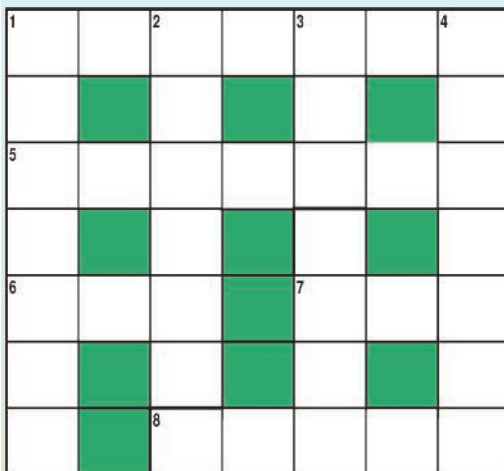
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