

THE EMPIRE FALLS...



More on Page 4

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Hello From The Editor

Welcome to the March edition of the Western Park Gazette.

This month they've started to demolish the historic Empire Hotel to make way for the new Lidl. A 180 year old building knocked down to be replaced by something that might just last 20 years - bargain! At least there'll be somewhere to get freshly made bread; so that's alright then. We've even got some nice pictures of the destruction.

As always we have all the normal malarkey from Helen Knott, Roger Blackmore and Tony Huxley. We welcome Sgt Kev Sharkey, from Hinckley Rd Policing unit, with their latest update, follow the ongoing saga of parking in Westcotes and a locally born, New York based composer, visits his old junior school.

And don't forget the Brain Tazers on the inside back page!

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

Follow us on Twitter @mygazette & Facebook by searching for the Western Park Gazette.

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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. Tel: 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

Secret Diary of Adrian Mole – The Musical: Until 4th April. Curve Theatre.

Into the Woods: 18-22nd March. Hansom Hall, Wellington St. Tickets from 0750 090 3737

One Man Breaking Bad: 25th March. DeMontfort Hall. 7.30pm.

King Richard III Celebrations: Runs until 26th March www.kingrichardinleicester.com

Leicester Glows: 27th March. 6-10pm. Jubilee Sq. Area. Free Event

Donna Disco: 28th March. Upstairs at the Western. 7.30pm.

Easter Egg Hunt: 4th April. Western Park. 2.30pm.

Farmers Market: 5th April. City Centre. 9-4pm.

Pack of Lies: 13-18th April. Little Theatre.

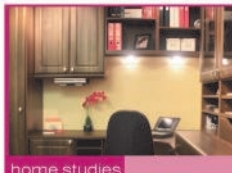
The Singular Exploits of Sherlock Holmes: 17th April. Guildhall. 8pm. e:museums@leicester.gov.uk

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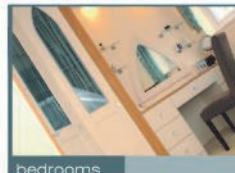
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The Empire Falls

It stood for nearly 190 years and took only three weeks to demolish.

The Empire Hotel, the side building and the remains of St. Augustine's church have been bulldozed to make way for the new Lidl store expected to open by Christmas.

Leicester City Council's planning committee approved Lidl's plans September in spite of strong opposition from campaigners who wanted the super-market giant to include the Georgian building in their plans.

Check out the Western Park Gazette's Facebook page for more pictures and videos of the demolition.



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Richard's Research Legacy

The reinterment of the remains of King Richard 3rd in Leicester Cathedral this month has clearly contributed to a sizeable influx of visitors to the City. As the world's attention focussed on our city, especial attention should be given also to the amazing feats of archaeological research on the part of those responsible for the discovery of the former king's bones.

Of course a discovery of such historical significance beneath the car park, used for many years by our Social Services Department, was bound to attract media attention. The spotlight also fell on the Archeology Department of Leicester University whose reputation has, as a result, gone global.

The University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was founded in 1995 by Richard Buckley and Patrick Clay to manage research projects throughout the East Midlands, specialising in urban sites and historic buildings. Amongst their work was the examination of the ground beneath the recent Highcross development.

Richard Buckley came to Leicester after graduat-



ing at Durham University in 1979 and for a number of years worked with Leicestershire County Council as a Field Officer. In this capacity he worked on the investigations into the Shires and Leicester Castle Hall and John of Gaunt's Cellar. It was, however, as Project Manager of the hunt for the remains of the last Plantagenet monarch that he achieved international recognition. Leicester University was able to provide specialist expertise in a whole range of different disciplines to assist in the work of the project. These included forensic pathologists, geologists, experts in genetics and a weapons specialist from the Department of Engineering. The rest, as they say, is history.

The work of our local archaeologists is ongoing so last year Hilary and I joined a group of enthusiasts on a visit to the excavations of the Iron Age hillfort at Burrough Hill in the north of the County.

Down at Hallaton, members of ULAS are investigating the foundations of St Morrel's Chapel, the site of which was unknown until comparatively recently. Other work has been undertaken in Brooksby Quarry and in the Waterfield Close area of Market Harborough. At the same time there have been further excavations in and around Leicester Cathedral. It is amazing how much still remains to be discovered beneath our streets, fields and countryside

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West Leicester based journalist and broadcaster Helen Knott casts her eye over the scourge of white plastic double glazing, incongruously replacing original windows.

KNOTT'S LANDING

Why do people buy big old houses if they just want to rip every original old feature out of them and turn them into quasi new homes? I need to get this off my chest because it's been annoying me for quite some time now.

When you buy an old house, and I'm talking about anything older than 75 years here, you don't own it, you are it's custodian. You get to look after the house for history. Yes you can make minor alterations, yes you have to make it comfortable and economical, but changes have to be in character with the property. This does not mean ripping out beautiful original windows and fitting any old crappy double glazing style. If the house has leaded windows, it's because an architect went to the trouble of deciding they would look best and the builder fitted them according to his plan. Windows are the soul of a building and if you change the style dramatically it destroys the character of the place.

Yes I understand the cost of bespoke hard wood double glazed units is horrendous, but if you're spending a fortune buying a big old fixer-upper house; budget better! If you want double glazing then dig into your pocket and pay for the wood, have your metal



windows replaced by conservators. This sort of glazing does cost more, but it costs more because you are stewarding a building, saving it for the future. Look after your wooden windows and they could last 60 years.

If you have a new roof put on then use materials similar to the roofing that was on there before! If you rip out original features like fireplaces, cornicing, an original 1920s copper for washing clothes then you need to be shot because you are stripping out history and putting your own bland modern taste in its place. If you want a modern house go and buy one, there are lots available at similar prices to the old houses, and leave the others to people who will care for these buildings.

If we aren't careful there won't be a single original, attractive, architect designed home from the 1900s left in the city. *Helen Knott*

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Oblivious to the public objection to the parking tax, the City Council imposed the parking scheme in Westend. The Council justified this by claiming to have 15% support so the scheme was introduced as experimental for 12 months to allow it to bed in and to make it palatable. At the end of the experiment, the support for the scheme has dwindled to less than 9%.

Of 115 businesses, only 4 in favour, which is 3%. Any clue on how our local democracy works?
Ravi (West End)

We have taken these quotes directly from the City Council's website:

City Mayor Peter Soulsby said: "We've done an extensive survey to find out people's views, and the feedback shows that overwhelmingly residents think is a worthwhile scheme."

"A small number of residents raised reservations about the scheme, and officers will now be looking at how these can be addressed."

"As an experimental scheme, it is something which we have been watching closely to try our best to ensure it meets local needs".

Leicester Glows

To mark the reinterment of King Richard III, Jubilee Square, Cathedral Gardens and the King Richard III Visitor Centre will join the people of Leicester for a unique and colourful experience.

King Richard will have been finally laid to rest at the Cathedral on 26th of March. The following day will see over 8,000 flames being lit around Jubilee Square and Cathedral Gardens, illuminating the area together with a trail of fire sculptures lighting the sky and marking the reinterment of a King.

The free commemoration takes place between 6 and 10pm on Friday 27th March. Spectators will be able to light their own flame to honour the King and produce a crown of flames at the Visitor Centre.

The evening will include a stunning illumination of Leicester Cathedral together with a spectacular firework display.



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Image from *Manuelita*, Fri 1 May, 7.30pm

A Musical Return to Dovelands

A Western Park born composer currently living and working in New York returned to his roots to give local school children a taste of life in the Big Apple.

Julian Blackmore whose recent successful off-Broadway musical, Academia Nuts, scooped several awards at last year's New York Music Festival visited his old school, Dovelands Primary.

He said: "I was invited by Jeremy Smith, an old school friend of mine and long time Dovelands teacher. I taught a song from the Broadway musical 'Newsies' to the whole of Year six - seventy-five kids. They were smart and quick learners; by the end of the session they were in fine voice! After answering a few questions we went to Mr Smith's classroom and did a more in depth Q&A session with his year six class.

"The students asked a wide range of intelligent and thoughtful questions which led on to topics as diverse as jet lag, deforestation and how to break in to the music business. The session ended, naturally, by watching some videos of my dog Parsley. Because why not?"

Julian has flown back to New York and is currently working on a number of projects including a new Christmas show, some tracks for US and UK

publishers and meetings with producers about the future of his musical Academia Nuts.

Find out more about Julian at www.julianblackmore.com



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Has Western Park Got Talent?

Well, the short answer is YES! Several young people entered and performed at the first ever Western Park's Got Talent on February 21st at St Anne's Church Hall. A true variety of acts took part in the event; from dance groups to poetry recitals, trumpets and pianos to a football demonstration! There were 17 acts in total and an age range of performers from 4 to 14 years old; all demonstrating confidence, and exuding talent!

The church hall was packed to the brim and it was great to see so many of the community together for the event and bring and share after show party; a real community event to raise money for the Tin Annie fund! We raised an outstanding £355!! Thank you so much to everyone who came along to watch! Although there was no overall winner this year, we do have 7 acts that were picked by the two impartial judges. These acts will perform again at this year's Western Park Festival on the 'Talent Stage'! This is a wonderful link between these two community events and I hope that this link can be replicated in future years.

I would like to express my thanks once again for the support of all the acts in making this event truly amazing! Don't forget to put the Western Park Festival date in your diary (Saturday 4th July); come along to support these acts and get involved with activities on the park!

If you have a talent you would like to share, get involved in next years show! Who knows it could be you on the 'talent stage' next summer.

Anna MacAulay



Got a story or picture? Holding an event or you're doing something special?

Tell us all about it!

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A FIST FULL OF CANS

Local clean up campaigner Adrian Albett is well on the way to hitting his 250,000 can recycling target thanks to a couple of hundred drinks cans stuffed into hedges off Ainsdale Road in Western Park.

The Gazette spotted the mess and called in Ady to clear out the cans.

Ady who is universally known as The Can Man said: "Normally when someone says there's hundreds of cans laying around, I don't always believe them. This time it was true - they were everywhere. It was never ending".

Ady with his mobile can carrier tricycle spent an hour collecting and crushing the cans he found in the cut-through between Ainsdale Road and Hinckley Road.

So far this month, alone, he has collected 780 cans making this year's total over 17,000.

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March Police Update

I begin this month's update by introducing myself, I am Sgt Kev Sharkey - the new neighbourhood Sgt for Western Park. Along with colleagues from the Fosse and Westcotes areas I will be keeping you updated with local policing matters.

I want to thank Sgt Rod Smart for his previous updates and wish him well in his new role in Loughborough.

Leicestershire Police has undergone a restructuring of how we do business; allowing local neighbourhood teams to be out on the street more of the time.

It has been a month since the changes and initial analysis shows that across the Force area the number of hours spent patrolling local neighbourhoods has increased by 40%.

Leicestershire Police Chief Constable Simon Cole said: "It has been an exciting and challenging time for officers and staff as they get used to new ways of working. I am really proud of the hard work and dedication, and early indications suggest the model is bedding in well and I look forward to the weeks ahead".

This month has seen some interesting incidents in the area of which these are a few of the highlights:

On 08/02/15 two males aged 18 and 23 years tried to break into a house on Westleigh Road but were chased by the occupant. The two males were subsequently detained and arrested by officers nearby. A swift investigation followed and both men were charged with the attempted burglary and remanded to Leicester Magistrates Court.

There has been a rising trend across the force area with vans being broken into via the side sliding doors and power tools being taken. Enquires led to an address on New Parks where 4 men were arrested and a substantial amount of power tools recovered. The males remain on police bail while the investigations continue.

We are seeing a second rising trend in the theft of motorcycles and mopeds and I would encourage all owners of these types of vehicles to ensure that they are alarmed and securely locked, preferably to a ground anchor or inside a garage. A useful addition is a tracker device to allow us to find the vehicles if they are stolen and return them in a timely fashion.

And finally we look forward to the King Richard III re-interment procession which will be coming through our neighbourhood along Hinckley Road on Sunday 22nd March and should be a fine spectacle!

Tony Huxley's Compost Corner



Spring has sprung again! Ponds will soon be teaming with wildlife as creatures hibernating in the silt wake up and visitors from the garden head to their summer residences. Any major pond overhauls should have been carried out in late autumn. Now is the time for a quick tidy up and dividing and adding new plant specimens. Carefully remove dead foliage and cut back overgrown plants before the water begins to foam with frog spawn.

In the contained habitat of a pond it's easy for one plant species to dominate, so choose wisely. Native flag iris (*I.pseudacorus*) can soon over run a small pond. Certain thuggish sedge grasses will leave you looking for the machete and pith helmet.

Last year five extremely invasive species, *Azolla filiculoides* (Water Fern), *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand pygmyweed), *Hydrocotyl ranunculoides* (floating pennywort), *Ludwigia grandiflora* (water primrose) and *Myriophyllum aquaticum* (water milfoil) were banned from sale! After cutting back aquatic plants be sure to bin or compost the re-

mains to prevent the chance of releasing unwanted plants into the environment.

When planting your pond choose species appropriate for the size and depth of the area you want to fill. Use purpose made mesh pots that allow water and gases to circulate around the roots. Line with hessian or a synthetic equivalent to stop the soil washing out. I find garden soil perfectly adequate as a potting mix. Specialist aquatic composts are also available. Never use regular compost or garden fertilisers. Top the pots off with a layer of gravel. This helps to weight the pots down and prevent the compost washing out. Avoid sharp stones that could damage the pond liner.

A pond planted with a well thought out range of deep water, marginals, floating and oxygenating plants can leave you attracting the admiration of your neighbours as well as the wildlife.

© Tony Huxley



Water Fern



Martin Page

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Westcotes Backs Parking Scheme

Leicester City Council claim that residents and businesses in Leicester's West End have backed an experimental residents' parking scheme ahead of a decision over whether to make it permanent.

Over 77% who took part in a survey in the streets covered by the Westcotes residents' parking scheme were in favour of it continuing, compared to 23% who opposed the scheme.

The figures come after over 2,500 homes and businesses in Westcotes were contacted to gauge support. Of the 342 replies, (14% response) 264 wanted it to continue, with 78 opposing.

People also gave their views on how effective the scheme had been, including some who had originally been against it but had since found it to be beneficial.

Leicester City Council will now consider the findings when deciding whether to make the experimental scheme permanent by March 21.

The Westcotes residents' parking scheme

came into effect in December 2013, covering a number of residential streets on either side of Narborough Road.

It includes an area bordered by Westleigh Road, Fosse Road North and Hinckley Road, as well as a number of streets between Narborough Road and Western Road.

Residents who backed the scheme reported fewer vehicles parked in the streets, particularly on match days, along with less traffic and congestion.

Inconsiderate parking at junctions and across driveways was cut making the streets more resident-friendly, with civil enforcement officers offering helpful advice to residents.

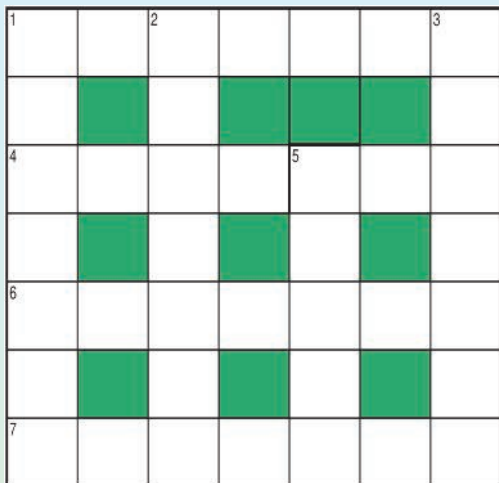
The smaller number of residents who continued to dislike the scheme felt it was a money-making council initiative, that it had made no difference to parking problems and that enforcement of parking restrictions was over-zealous.

Surveyed businesses included five who were satisfied with the current scheme, six who opposed it and 14 who accept the scheme but suggested improvements such as better signage and making sure all ticket machines work properly.

(see Letter Box page 19)

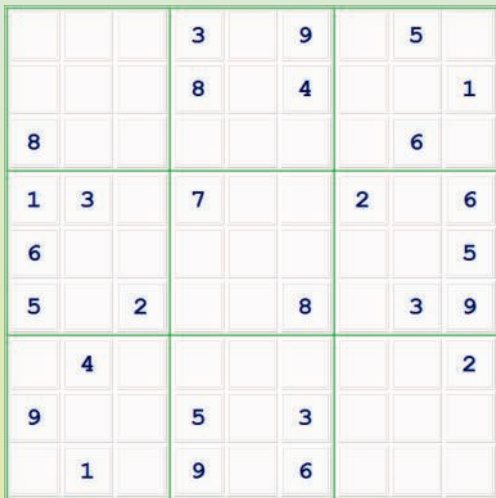


BRAIN *TAZERS*



1 across: Spring flowers 1 down: Juicy fruit 2:
Ambiguous 3: Decency 4: Pretty young woman 5:
Overdo it 6: Pet lizard 7: Backdrop

© Paul Towers



1. Nab Eery Nuts is an anagram of which popular anthropomorphic character?
2. What comes next in this sequence: Y, Y, H, L - - ?
3. What is no sooner spoken than broken?
4. What is in the middle of London?
5. In a leap year – how many seconds are there in each month?
6. What has a mouth but can't eat, moves without legs and has a bank but no money?

(Solutions at www.westernparkgazette.co.uk)

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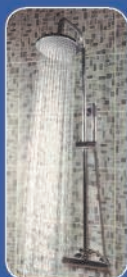
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