

Western Park Gazette

Information and advertising for the Western Park Area

April 2009

www.westernparkgazette.co.uk



Park Wind Turbine Idea Blows Away

Western Park will not be home to a 450ft wind turbine.

The park had been put forward as a potential site as part of a Leicester City Council drive to use more environmentally friendly sources of power but it has now been ruled out of the scheme for six wind turbines around the city.

It has been reported that this is because wind and soil tests to see if the area could support a turbine came back showing it was not viable.

The proposals were for a wind turbine standing at 450ft tall with a viewing platform, similar to a scheme at Swaffham in Norfolk. This would have meant a structure over 100ft taller than the Statue of Liberty being sited somewhere on Western Park.

The Swaffham turbine was designed by Sir Norman Foster and features a viewing platform at 65m..

But a spokesperson for Leicester City Council said: *"We are not considering Western Park as a potential site for a large-scale wind turbine."*

Other sites being looked at included Beaumont Park, Castle Hill Park and Ashton Green, Humberstone Heights golf course and land near Western Park Golf Course in Braunstone Frith. Of these, only the sites at Ashton Green and Castle Hill Park are thought to be suitable.

Leicester City Council needs to obtain 20 per cent of its power from renewable sources within the next 15 years to meet Government targets.

The proposal to site six giant wind turbines on Leicester's parks and golf courses was part of that strategy.

Wind turbines often divide opinion with many opposing them on grounds of noise and viability as an energy source and while many approve of their green credentials.



TREMENDOUS VIEW - BUT NOT PRACTICAL

**WIN A PORTRAIT PHOTO SESSION FROM
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But what Western Park would have looked like with wind turbine is now a matter for the imagination. So we've used some.



**Wind Turbine 137m, Statue of Liberty 93m
Space shuttle 56 m.
Not to scale. The page isn't long enough!**

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Greetings from the Editor

Hello and welcome to April's edition of the Western Park Gazette.

In this issue, we get into a spin over the defunked proposals to site a 400 feet high wind turbine on Western Park.

Roger Blackmore takes time out to sniff the cherry blossom that used to blow along what is now Braunstone Gate.

Helen Knott, new mum and Western Park's answer to Lois Lane, sniffs around the children's sand pit in the park and decides she shouldn't have. Andy Miarkowski our computer expert, drools uncontrollably over some new gizmo and our local gardening guru, Tony Huxley did his thing in the garden. Luckily we stopped him and he wrote an article instead.

And if you're fretting about Western Park house values as the recession bites, Nick Salmon from Harrison Murray finds out if it's as bad as we think.

Don't forget this month's competition!

We've teamed up with Dream Pictures on Hinckley Road, to offer you the chance to have a family portrait taken in their new state of the art studios.

Sharon

editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk

Events Diary

Stay and Play - West End Children's Centre Catesby Street. Free activities and nibbles or under 5's and carers. Weekly, Weds 1-3pm & Fri. 9.15-11.15. Tel: 0116 2252225.

Knitting Circle Meet every Thursday from 1pm at Mary Clare, 4 Shaftsbury Av. Tel: 0116 2551866

Western Park Community Meeting - Doveland Junior School. 27th April. 7pm.

Fun Fair at Abbey Park until 26th April.

St George's Festival - Various locations and times around Leicester City Centre. Details on LCC web site. 19th -26th April.

New Carers Coffee Morning at The Old Corn Exchange near Western Park. 6th & 20th May 10.30am-12pm. 0116 254 6464.

Food Growing Workshop at the Eco House: Growing Edible Flowers 10th May 2pm-4pm.

Spring Kite Flying at Western Park 27th May 2-3.30pm Call 0116 254 8540.

City of Leicester Singers with the Leicester Phoenix Youth Orchestra sings songs of England at St James The Greater Church, London Road on Sat 20th June. Tickets £8.00 on the door or from 0116 239 2708.

Western Park Bowling Club welcomes new members. Tel: 0116 291 2094

Email: editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk

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For those of us who enjoy the nightlife on Braunstone Gate, it's hard to believe this whole area used to be cherry orchards.

Roger Blackmore, looks at the history.

From Cherry Orchards to Housing Estates

Returning from a visit to see the film "Young Victoria" at the Phoenix recently, I began to think about what our area must have looked like at about the time Britain's longest serving monarch ascended the throne in 1837.

Maps of the period show that at the time Leicester had had hardly spread at all west of the River Soar and the whole area was taken up with parkland, gardens and cherry orchards apart from a few dwellings on Braunstone Gate.



THIRD TREE ON THE LEFT - NOW MARIO'S CHIPPY

Two big estates dominated the scene: the old manor of Westcotes and Dannetts Hall.

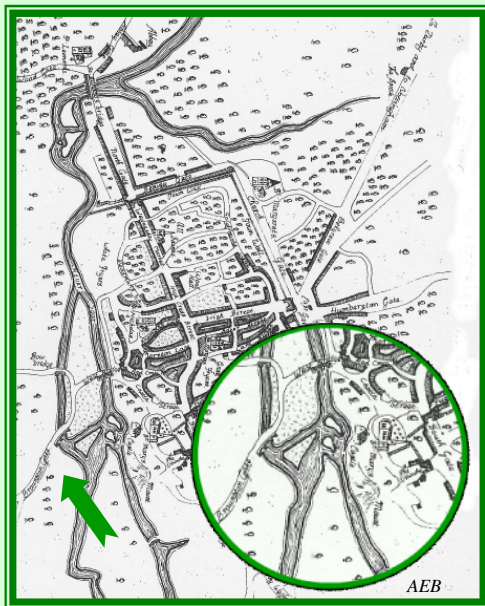
By the middle of the century however developers had begun to cast their eyes on the potential of the west of the city for housing development.

In 1861 the Dannetts Hall estate was bought by the Freehold Land Society intending to build quality homes. These attempts were thwarted when the rents proved unaffordable to many people and as a result poorer homes were constructed on the site.

Even in those days cries were heard that the area should be preserved as public open space. You can still trace the streets built on this estate today as several were named after Dr Noble, at one time a prominent Leicester City Councillor and a local MP, who lived at the Hall until his death in 1861, and his daughters - Flora, Clara and Kate.

A few years later the Westcotes estate was also sold off for development in what is now the Westcotes Drive area.

Many bemoaned the loss of open space resulting from these developments and towards the end of Victoria's long reign the City Council bought the Mellor Estate to form Western park, still the City's largest public park, and a new recreation ground was also created on Fosse Road.



Braunstone Gate as it was in 1645

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Events in the Parish of St. Anne's St. Paul's and St. Augustine's

Spring Fair

The St. Anne's Mother's Union are putting on the lunches at the Deanery Spring Fair being held at the Church Hall on Letchworth Road on **Saturday 25th of April from 11am-1.30pm**. Admission 20pence. If you'd like to join the Mother's Union or find out more about their activities, call Sheila on 0116 2858511, if you live in St. Anne's Parish or Margery on 0116 2858165, if you're in St. Paul's and St. Augustine's.

Plant Sale

Feeling green fingered? Pick up your potted plants at the plant sale being held at the Christian Aid Coffee Morning on Saturday **May 9th** at the St Paul's Worship Centre on Kirby Road next to the Pocket Park.

Sing from the Shows

If you're in good, or bad voice, but you like howling out musical theatre numbers, then **Saturday May 9th from 7.30pm at St. Annes**, is the place to be.

Raising the Rafters

On **Sunday 21st of May at 8pm**, you're invited along to St. Anne's Church for another free musical event. Following on from the very successful performance of Stainer's Crucifixion in March, St. Anne's choir will once again be joined by members of Leicester's Tudor Choir for a special Ascension Day service.

For further information, contact the Reverend Chris Oxley, on 285 8452.

Taizé

On **Sunday 24th May**, marking the Seventh Sunday of Easter at St. Anne's, from 6 pm - Worship with music from Taizé.

St. Paul's Worship Centre

Every Tuesday

10am - Mums and Toddlers.

2pm - Over 60's Group.

St. Anne's

Thursdays from 1.30pm - Pram Club

Fridays - Coffee Drop ins from 10.30 and light lunches from 11.30 on the first Friday of every month.

Holding an event near Western Park?
TELL US ABOUT IT!

Email: editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk

Or write to

The editor c/o 62 Ainsdale Road, Leicester
LE3 0UA

Western Park resident, journalist and broadcaster, Helen Knott won't have sand kicked in her face! Especially if she doesn't know what's in it....

KNOTT'S LANDING

Helen Knott

The little kids of the Western Park area are getting a really raw deal at the moment. I have recently started using the playground on the park with my little one and suddenly I have a new cancer eating at my soul. Playground envy.

When I visit friends around the county I am constantly amazed at how brilliant the play facilities are for kids. Kirby Muxloe has a great park for kids. Properly fenced in, exciting play equipment is protected with CCTV cameras and children really seem to enjoy playing there. Down on Upperton Road the play area has recently been redeveloped and is bright, exciting, protected and a nice place to be.

Then I come home and visit Western Park. Oh dear! The childproof gates don't work any more meaning your little escapologist is home free. The two from the car park onto the park are both broken. The area is not fully fenced in because part of the border is a hedge with holes in it big enough for a toddler to get through and the play area is so big you can easily lose sight of your kids if they run off.

Then there is the sandpit. On a recent visit, every single parent who came near it said the same thing. "Don't take your shoes off, you don't know what's in there" and who can blame them. What self respecting animal wouldn't use this carefully placed animal lavatory if given the chance?

The bigger kids have a better deal. At least they've got some big, decent pieces of play equipment like the skateboard rink and the big wooden adventure play area.

This doesn't make it easy if you have little kids and older ones though, because you then have to shuttle between different areas of the park while holding



The Sand Pit: Where Things Could Lurk

onto your little ones in case they make a bid for freedom.

What we need is a fully fenced, separate, play area for the under fives within the current play area. One with a working gate and age appropriate play equipment so parents can let their young ones run around and be able to see them at all times. We need a colourful area that is a nice place to be, with that special floor covering to stop grazed knees and if necessary some CCTV to keep it safe. It isn't a lot to ask for our kids.

Leicester City Council recently got over £1 million from the Governments Playbuilder initiative for a programme of improvements for children's play areas. The first year of that scheme is soon to be finished and six play areas have been refurbished.

A spokesperson for the city council said: "The council was awarded £1.2 million to refurbish a number of play areas over a three year period. The first year is now coming to a close, with six city play areas given a makeover. An improvement programme is currently being developed for a further 16 play areas over the next two years."

They couldn't tell me when it would be Western Park's turn....I won't hold my breath.

MORE FROM HELEN NEXT MONTH

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If you are a business owner or manager based around Western Park how about offering your support to young people who are disadvantaged or excluded from the labour market? And all it will cost you is an hour of your time.

THE SECOND CHANCE PROJECT

Young learners from the Western Park and surrounding areas are calling on local businesses to show their support for the Second Chance Project by attending their Open Day.

The Youth Team at Apex, are committed to inspiring young people aged 13-19 by supporting and developing them to achieve their potential by gaining qualifications as well as increasing their self confidence through a life skills programme and then eventually into employment, education or training.

The Open Day is an opportunity for businesses to speak to the learners as well as their tutors to see what local young people have to offer and get a better insight into the work being completed to turn their lives around.

On the day, you can try your hand at rug making, test your fitness knowledge in the sports and fitness room, sample tasty treats in the cookery class and even enjoy fresh fruit with the chocolate

fountain.

Apex Open Day, 22nd April at Roman House, Cumberland Street, just off Northgate, Leicester, LE1 4QS. 10.30-12.30

For more information call 0116 2614840 or email skomrska@apex-works.co.uk



Second Chance Students Hard at Work

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES
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THE WESTERN PARK GAZETTE**

GAZETTE LETTER BOX

email:editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk

Every month I must get four or five charity plastic bags pushed through my letterbox asking for clothing donations.

Exactly how many clothes do these people think I own? I would have to throw away a wardrobe full just to keep up every week.

On the plus side, I haven't bought a bin liner in ages.

RP Western Park.

I was sorry to learn about Lane's shutting on King Richard's Road.

With the closure of Heard's and now Lanes, there are no local butchers.

I hope that someone will be able to take on the mantle because without this sort of shop, Western Park will be all the poorer.

RS Western Park

Does anybody remember the lady who used to run Optimus on Kirby Road?

I used to spend my pocket money there when I was a child in the 60's and 70's. It was an Aladdin's Cave of toys and nick knacks.

I remember buying a Dinkey UFO interceptor in 1970. It's broken now and I was hoping to track her down and get a refund.

SB Woodville Rd

FOSSE RECREATION GROUP

NEWS LETTER



Our bid to the Ward Committee was successful and £200 has been donated on behalf of the FRG towards a notice board.

New benches will be put in the park during the spring.

Kitchen units from the hut have been donated to charity before the hut is demolished.

There have been issued raised over large groups congregating on the park and deterring other park users. If you see anything suspicious please ring Hinckley Road Police Station on 0116 222 2222.

As a good will gesture, Leicester City Council will provide refreshment funds for volunteers at up and coming clean up days.

CLEAN UP DATES

Sun 11th May 10am-12pm

Mon 29th June 6pm-8pm

Tues 11th August 6pm-8pm

Sat 26th Sept 10am-12pm

Sun 25th Oct 10am-12pm

Everybody Welcome, just meet at the park gates on Wentworth Road.

Tony Huxley's Garden Tidings

There are few more idyllic places to relax on a hot summer day than in the shade of a flower festooned pergola, at least that's what my wife tells me.

So taking a hint I have finally planted some climbers to cover our pergola.

The three I chose were; *Clematis armandii*. Its glossy evergreen foliage gives year round interest. Its' prolific, scented white blooms early in the New Year help ease the winter blues. I also planted "Galore" a mid to late summer flowering clematis with purple blooms. When planting clematis try to site their roots in a cool, shaded spot where they won't dry out. After planting cut back to about 30cm (12") above the ground. This encourages more basal shoots and stimulates root growth, which helps ward off the dreaded fungal disease, clematis wilt!

My wild card selection was is *Schisandra rubriflora*. A deciduous climber with wisteria-like woody stems and rich crimson flowers that can fruit in favourable conditions.

By now all my tomato seedlings should be in 9cm (3½ ") pots.

I'm looking forward to trying the San Marzone tomatoes. An Italian friend assures me they're the best variety to cook with. Half a packet of seed has produced several hundred plants-that'll be an awful lot of bolognaise sauce!



Schisandra Rubriflora

More from Tony next month.

**To comment - email:
editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk**

GAZETTE COMPETITION

Congratulations to our reader Leanne Haynes who won last month's Gazette completion for a pair of tickets to the opening night of Chicago at the DeMontfort Hall in May.

She identified, that in the film version, double murderess Velma Kelly was played by Catherine Zeta Jones.



Sponsored competition

This month, we have something very special for you to win.

We've teamed up with Dream Pictures on Hinckley Road, to offer you an amazing prize worth £180.00! Have you ever thought how nice it would be to have a beautiful family portrait taken by a professional photographer?

Johnathan Edgerton's new studio on Hinckley Road offers you the chance to experience a touch of Hollywood with your wedding videos and photographs. Using the most up to date Hi Definition equipment, Johnathan and his team can bring the most out of your special day.

Your wedding video becomes a full scale film project,

packaged in high definition in a variety of formats for you to enjoy again and again over the years.

And it's not only videos that Dream Pictures produce; using natural images and non posed shots, you can have a family portrait like no other!



This month you can win the chance to have an A3 framed family portrait and 2 smaller prints worth £180 created just for you.

To win this amazing prize - answer this question.

When was Dream Pictures established?

To find the answer either drop into the studio and ask or go to the website www.dreampictures.biz

Email your answer to:

editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk or simply drop it off at **Dream Pictures 259 Hinckley Road, Leicester LE3 0TH**

Send your answers in by the 27th of April 2009 (1 winner will be picked at random. Decision is final)

Worried about Western Parks house prices as we plunge deeper into a recession?

Yes prices are dropping and mortgages are harder to get but there are still buyers out there.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING?

By Nick Salmon

TWO statistics about the property market recently caught the headlines.

Property portal, Rightmove, revealed that asking prices for properties on their website increased by 1.2% in February, whilst Halifax announced that prices based on their mortgage approvals increased in January by 1.9%.

Some might be tempted to latch on to these figures as the sign of a new trend, but they are such insignificant percentages that they don't yet amount to a green shoot of recovery.

Mortgage lending is at such historically low volumes that the Halifax figures are probably based on relatively few transactions. It is also worth noting that 1.9 per cent on a £200,000 price is just £3,800 so don't get too excited.

What is significant is that in some parts of the UK estate agents have seen a marked increase in buyer enquiries since the beginning of January.

At the offices of Harrison Murray, enquiries have leapt up since the turn of the year, and I have no doubt that this will translate into more sales in the coming months.

I believe the sentiment in the market is changing from the gloom of 2008 and everything points to a growing sense that now is the time to jump in and buy.

Although the lack of mortgage lending is strangling the volume of sales because many would-be buyers cannot afford to put down 25 or 30 per cent deposits, there are very significant numbers of people able to finance the entire purchase.

Those who sold up a year or more ago, put the money in the bank and have been renting since are now out looking. First time buyers with a big deposit provided by their parents now see renting as more expensive than paying a mortgage. Cash-rich investors unable to get a decent return on their High Street savings or from the stock market are now acquiring property in the expectation of far better returns from rental yields and long-term capital growth.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that with all these buyers around property prices must be going up. Sorry, they are not.

A number of factors are holding prices in check. There's a lot of property up for sale, some of it having been on the market for a long time, so there is a good choice for buyers. Secondly, these buyers are extremely well informed about values, do their research and are out to drive a hard bargain.



And that offer will likely be not be 15 or 20 per cent below the asking price – which owners will accept if they can get a similar amount off their ongoing purchase. Thirdly, the lack of mortgage lending reduces the overall number of buyers. Lastly, there is the nagging concern about the state of the economy and the potential for more bad news and job losses which, taken together, sap some buyers' confidence. Barring unexpected and dramatically bad news leaping onto the newspaper front pages I believe we may near the end of the beginning of this particular property market cycle.

Estate agency tipped into the downturn much earlier than the general economy – we felt the first effects of the crisis as long ago as September 2007 – and it is just possible that the industry is leading the economy onto the bumpy surface at the bottom of the recession, where it will remain for some time before those green shoots become a reality. It all points to a helpful increase in sales volumes but I cannot see prices doing anything other than continuing to moderate in the next six months.

The good news is that if you need to sell and are prepared to be realistic and not greedy with your asking price the chances of getting a sale have considerably improved when compared to the last months of 2008.

Nick Salmon is the Commercial Director of Harrison Murray Estate Agents.

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The Western Park Gazette

Supporting Business and Community

Loving Life Across Western Park

Most homes in Western Park have either a PC or a laptop, sometimes several scattered about. But for how long will the PC tower sit in the corner? Technology marches on and the days of traditional computing are numbered.

Nice Box - What's in it?

Andrzej Miarkowski

Touch screen mobile phones controlled by fingertip gestures are currently all the rage, but this is just a glimpse of what could be coming our way.

The Vista replacement, Windows 7 will also support touch sensitive displays, but other related and very cool technology is emerging.

Microsoft Surface is a computer that resembles a coffee table and with a hefty £8500 price tag, intended initially for retail and hospitality markets rather than for the home. Using Infrared cameras and an image processing system it detects fingers and other objects touching the display and fires off whatever application you want. You can actually control interactive graphics with your hands. You might have seen something like it shown off in the last Bond movie A Quantum of Solace.

An enhancement to this system called Second Light is in development that will have sensors to interpret gestures and movements without having to touch the

screen. Over time, these technologies will become commonplace used in all manner of devices (from a wall, to a mirror or even your refrigerator door). Maybe this is the beginning of the end for the mouse?

You could end up on the sofa waving away into thin air to connect to the internet or download your favourite TV show.



Microsoft Surface: An £8500 coffee table

There is another subtle change in these new systems; the graphical capabilities use DirectX (currently only used for games) which can bring high quality imagery combined with (subtle or gratuitous) animations even to business applications, and brings the visual worlds of the web and the desktop much closer together.

Andrzej Miarkowski is a Microsoft Certified Professional Developer.

CHANGES TO SKYLINK SERVICE

if you're planning to fly on holiday this year from East Midlands Airport and you're expecting to catch the Skylink bus on Hinckley Road, think again.

The service, run by Arriva, was taken over by new operator Kinchbus at the beginning of April

The new 24/7 timetable will no longer pick up on Hinckley Road, New Parks Way, Groby Road and Field Head.

If you want to save on Taxi charges and airport parking costs, you will have to travel to St Margaret's Bus Station to catch the service.

Standard fares will remain the same at £6 adult single, £10 adult return, £10 family return valid for a family/group of five (maximum two adults).

Timetable and route information is available from skylink.co.uk or call Kinchbus on 01509 815637.

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You can sign up at www.westernparkgazette.co.uk and take a look at the picture archive or read an on line version of the magazine.

You can contribute articles and ideas directly to us, by emailing editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk.

If you're on Facebook, we have an open group that anyone can join.

Happy Surfing!

ALF'S LITTLE COLOURED BOOK

West End illustrator Alf Chapman and Leicester author Yvonne Samuel have teamed up to create a children's book called "Learning with Strawberry and Friends."

The book aims to introduce pre-school children to colours.

It is beautifully illustrated by Alf, a local artist, whose studio is based on Fosse Road South.

The book features fruit figures of which Strawberry Junior is the main character, making early reading an enjoyable and educational experience. Alf is already sharpening up his pencil to illustrate more titles in the series covering numbers, shapes, flowers and opposites.



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