



TOTALLY CANKERED

Western Park Trees At Risk



More on page 4



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Hello From The Editor

Welcome to the April edition of the Gazette. The noose loosens and life edges towards normality, or a new normal at least. On the 12th April there was a stampede towards the shops, hair dressers, salons and pubs. People were queuing to get into some city centre venues, whilst others were wandering around in a confused daze, dumbly pointing at reopened shops, wondering if it was safe for them to go in. It probably, maybe is. Go on, try it... It's weird.

So, what have we got for you this month? The lime trees in Western Park seem to have a nasty and lethal disease, we find out how a small craft business managed to survive and eventually thrive through the lockdown, Tony Shelley looks at the life of the 19th century local hosiery worker and poet, William Jones, Helen Knott says increased traffic on Western Park could become a nightmare and gardener, Carey Tunstall, discovers the delights of sunflowers.

There's the latest updates from the local police and Project Hive. And if you're feeling particularly clever we have the ongoing torture that are the Braintazers.

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Copy & Advertising Deadline - April 29th 2021

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Published by Rapsallion Media

62 Ainsdale Rd
Leicester LE3 0UA

Printed by **Flexpress Ltd**

6 Coal Cart Road, Interchange,
Birstall, Leicester, LE4 3YB



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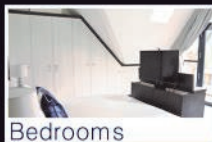


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TOTALLY CANKERED

Western Park's lime trees, along the promenade, are under threat according to gardening expert Tony Huxley.

Following on from local residents reports of a black substance on the bark of some of the 125 year old lime trees, the Gazette asked Tony to take a look, and what he discovered is not encouraging.

He said: "It looks serious and could be affecting half a dozen limes. I reckon the culprit is a type of bleeding canker. It's a fungal like pathogen - now considered to be a kind of algae. It could the same or similar species that infects Horse Chestnuts, which I see a lot of."

In Britain, both *Phytophthora cactorum* and *P. plurivora* have been found to cause bleeding cankers on the trunks of lime trees, as well as Oak.

"The lack of decent frosts in the much milder winters and springs can increase infection. Wetter weather can spread the disease and rain splashes can send the spores into the air. If the trees are under more stress, as they may be with increasing



park traffic, that can increase their susceptibility."

Worryingly, *Phytophthora* species are understood to have damaged several ecosystems in Europe, with *P. plurivora* as the main culprit behind disease and declining beech tree numbers.

As the arboreal reduction continues, it's still unclear how to manage or control these aggressive pathogens in forest ecosystems.

Stewart Doughty, head of Leicester City Council's Parks & Open Spaces, said: "We have been monitoring the condition of the trees along the main drive in Western Park for some time and can confirm that some of them are suffering from *Phytophthora*, or bleeding canker. A site meeting will take place next week, when a course of action will be decided upon."

However, according to Tony Huxley, the Western Park limes are living on borrowed time. He says: "Tree preservation orders or not, there's nothing you can really do about it other than remove them."

"*Phytophthora* diseases are completely evil. It's going to be a very costly operation."



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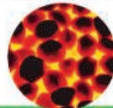
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WWCE's Project Hive is run by local residents who are raising funds to redevelop the old Eco House into a community space.

As you may have seen or heard elsewhere, the application for planning consent has now been submitted for the transformative works on the site of the derelict former open air school buildings in Western Park. It's been a long time since we undertook a partnership with Parmar Properties with the clear goal that doing so would make sure the community gets something out of the redevelopment works. The careful restoration of the Grade 2 listed building and its return to everyday use will stop it being a magnet for continued anti-social behaviour. On top of that the work will also provide a cafe facility along the promenade for everyone to use.

I'm sure that you will agree that it has been a big help to have park on our doorsteps during this last difficult year. Won't it be lovely when you can grab a coffee while you are out on your daily exercise? With a permanent cafe you could arrange to meet up with a friend for tea and cakes after the school run, or for lunch at the weekend.

While we will be tendering for someone else to

operate the cafe itself, its success will support our work to bring the separate Project Hive to life. Find out more about WWCE and Project Hive at our website wwce.org.uk or on Facebook @wwceleicester



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KNOTT'S LANDING

Thanks to the joys of lockdown, Western Park is bursting with visitors and they often come by car. Anyone who has walked along the promenade recently knows it's like playing dodgeball with traffic. Your heart is in your mouth as your kids ride their bikes and scooters on the road to keep socially distant, but run the risk of being flattened by a van driven by builders looking for a quiet lunchbreak or a demon dog walker who has to drive their hound to the park.

I'm no tree expert, but I suspect the traffic is also partly responsible for the flooding we get on the park and it's probably damaging the 125 year-old trees on the promenade. We have a traffic problem and the solution seems simple. Let's just ban cars from the park. We already have a car park near the Eco House which could be the designated disabled parking site. All the council has to do is lock the gates and allow us to roam free.

Of course it's not that simple and it's about to get worse. Into our traffic and pollution problem (local air quality is some of the worst in Leicester), I'd like you to add the comings and goings of at least 32 more vehicles on a daily basis, plus delivery lorries. Hell, you might as well blast the promenade all the way through to Glenfield Road and call it a motorway!

The traffic will come from the new office buildings and café on the Western Park Open School site for which a planning application has been submitted. Having looked at the plans, I can count 32 new parking spaces and a new bridge access onto the site. Offices have visitors, so we can probably safely assume there will be a number of extra cars visiting the site daily and, if they can't park in these spaces, they are going to park on the promenade. We can't use the Eco-house car park because that's going to be dug up for housing and the school site application clearly includes the promenade as an access route which means the park gates will no longer be locked at night.

It's a mess of the council's making. They want to be rid of the costly responsibility for the decrepit Grade II listed Open School site. Developers need to turn a profit and residents deserve a safe, pollution and traffic free park. On this issue, are our best interests being served? Will the council be brave and ban parking on the park and surrounding roads? Turn the site into a no vehicle access office site? I doubt it.



Helen Knott

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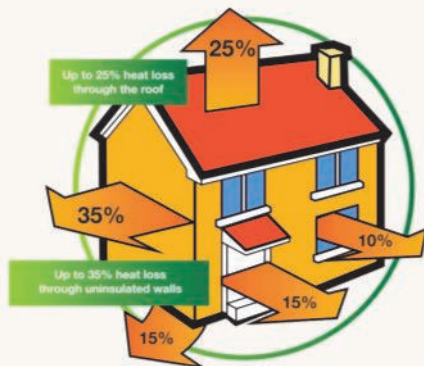
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FRAMEWORK KNITTER & POET

In the graveyard at St Michael and All Angels in the Leicestershire village of Cosby, stands a headstone with the name William Jones, followed by a few lines of poetry, fading with the passing of time. Jones was a poet, quite a good one in fact, but his work has been sadly neglected and I only came to know it by reading about his friend and colleague, the famous Leicester Chart-ist, Thomas Cooper, at the Bishopsgate Institute in East London.

William Jones was born 1808 in Cosby and moved to Leicester to take up his position as a framework knitter after marrying Sarah Anne Stretton in St. Mary's Church, Willoughby Waverleys, on June 23 1828. They lived first in Willow Bridge Street (Off Russell Square) then settled at number 11 Pelham Street, opposite the Royal Infirmary on Welford Road.

In his lifetime he published two poetry collections, 'The Spirit; Or A Dream Of Woodlands' in 1850, and 'Poems Descriptive, Progressive & Humorous' in 1853. Both books were published with the help of friends; a kind of 19th century crowdfunding project. The only place I was able to acquire a facsimile of the latter book, was by sending for a copy in America.

His strength as a poet lies in his highly personal descriptive verse, mostly about what he saw and

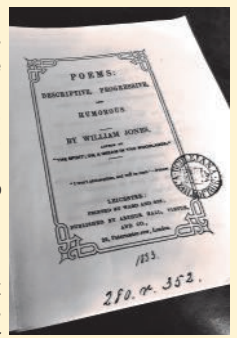
witnessed. He clearly loved nature, and always retained an affection for the village where he was born.

He obviously relished his friendship with the famous chartist Thomas Cooper, who encouraged Jones to write and get involved with the local pre-trade union movement. Jones even assisted at Cooper's Adult Sunday school and became an active supporter of the Leicester Democratic Hall of Science.

The 1851 census still described William Jones as a framework knitter and poet. By then he had become a respected literary figure with a stable job and a sympathetic employer allowing him to continue publishing up until a couple of years before his death. He died at the age of 47 in 1855 leaving Sarah and one son. There was a sizable funeral procession along the Welford Road and onto Cosby where he was buried, and sadly forgotten by the literary fraternity.

Some years ago, I nominated him for a green plaque; unfortunately, no record of his home in Cosby can be identified. However, the search will continue.

Tony Shelley



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BACK IN THE BEER!

Pub goers returned with a vengeance on April 12th as venues with outside areas were allowed to reopen following the relaxation of lockdown rules.

West Leicester's biggest pub, The Crows Nest, was no exception. It became very busy the second it opened at 11am and stayed that way until closing time.

Manager Ray Cooper said, "It's been a tough year but we've been planning this for months. We expanded outside seating into the car park and put in a marquee. It's been rammed. We've taken on eight waiting staff; burgers and food has been flying out. It's been huge.

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LETTER BOX



Dear editor: Just a little story of kindness by my son helping out people less fortunate than ourselves in the unpredictable world we live in, but on Friday 19th March 2021, Red Nose Day, 11 year old Eamon McCabe Jnr, year 6 pupil at Christ the King RC primary school, held a charity cupcake sale to raise funds for comic relief.

He baked, decorated and sold cakes in a very fun, friendly way, social distancing of course, from outside my house and made an amazing grand total of £52. That was absolutely brilliant and will be much appreciated by the guys from Comic Relief.

So a big well done to Eamon Jnr because he really does deserve a mention in these crazy times and we are all very proud of him round here and a massive thank you to everybody that day that stopped and bought a cake!

(Eamon McCabe Snr)



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SEWING THE SEEDS

The lockdown effected many business owners from West Leicester. Some bit the dust and others turned a handful of lemons into lemonade. One example of a business that survived and thrived, albeit in a new form, is the Crafty Sew and Sew fabric shop in the city centre.

Freya Gilbert, from Western Park, who co-owns the business, was determined that the five years they had spent establishing it wasn't going to be thrown away.

Freya said: "At the start of the first lockdown, my business partner Sarah and I met at the shop at 9pm, and filled our cars with as much stock as we could carry. Once home, the stock filled our living rooms; fabrics, sewing patterns and kits. Then we started to work out how we could pivot our business to the new normal. Through Crafty Sew & So we sell fabrics for dressmaking and craft projects, we run sewing and craft workshops, and design sewing kits and patterns for people to sew at home. We'd worked hard to turn our lovely shop into the heart of Leicester's sewing community.



"Very quickly, like most businesses, we figured out how important Zoom was going to be to us. We took our sewing classes online, so we could connect with customers and continue to inspire students to learn to sew. The boom of crafts in lockdown was in our favour and we love helping beginners come to the craft and sew their own face masks and also give them a new hobby and some escapism.

"Working from home and taking care of our children, we realised that we needed to make some longer-term changes for the benefit of our business, and our families, and we have since moved out of our retail shop to a studio, where we can grow our online services and continue to connect with local sewists though open days and workshops.

"It certainly hasn't been easy, but overall we believe we are creating a better business for us and our customers."



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CIMA

April Police Update

April 12th saw the opening of non-essential retail, hairdressers, gyms, libraries, community centres, restaurants and pubs (for outside service only). Some of our young police officers have never experienced buying a pint in a pub! Whilst some parts of the country enjoyed a short respite from the first lockdown in March 2020, Leicester never had the opportunity to do so. As you take the opportunity to enjoy the easing of restrictions, please do so sensibly. Europe is in the grip of a third wave of Covid cases and many countries are still in crisis from the pandemic. Maintain social distancing, wear masks when necessary, wash your hands frequently and utilise every opportunity to test yourself and your family for Covid. This virus has become a malingering presence in our world, but in time it can be controlled, even eradicated, and we can move on.

On the theme of moving, Rob Randell, the commander for the West Leicester Neighbourhood Policing Area (NPA), is moving to a new role. Rob has been one of the longest serving inspectors in Neighbourhood policing in recent times, and is a popular leader amongst the rank and file. Rob's new role will see him becoming the link officer for the incumbent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which can only be advantageous for the community of the West NPA. I am pleased to announce that Inspector Michelle Zakoscielny (Affectionately referred to as Inspector "Z") will replace Rob as the new NPA Commander. Michelle, has been policing the West area for 15+ years and is well versed with the local communities. She has an excellent grasp of what is important to you and what police officers need to do to best serve you. Michelle is the logical choice to replace Rob, and I wish her well in the challenges ahead.

One such challenge will be addressing the issue of knife related crime. We have recently seen several serious knife related assaults upon young people perpetrated by young people. You will likely see an increase in policing presence in and around our local parks in the coming weeks and the deployment of the knife arch in strategic locations. There will be an increase in the use of our stop and search powers in key locations as we seek to stem the tide of this behaviour. This problem is not one the police are able to solve alone and calls for a step change in thinking. As a community, as a parent, these conversations need to be had with our young people.

As our community centres open up, be sure to look out for our beat surgeries. All are welcome to come and speak with your local officers. These will be advertised on Neighbourhood link and our West Leicester social media pages (Twitter & Facebook).

Sgt Ed Jones

CAREY'S COMPOST CORNER



This is the time of year when I start thinking about which annual flowers will be in bloom in the height of summer.

One of the easiest and most dramatic flowers to grow is the sunflower. It's part of the daisy family and has been cultivated for its edible seeds for 5000 years.

Growing them is a great project for all ages, they can be raised in all manner of spaces and are beneficial to wildlife. What's not to love about this majestic flower? Sowing the seed is best between April and May. I sow a single seed into individual recycled and compostable pots, this makes planting out much easier, once they have grown large enough. It is a great activity for the kids too, either as an introduction to gardening, or a continued hobby. I suggest they sow *Helianthus annuus* - Russian giant, which can reach the dizzy heights of 3 metres, or the slightly smaller, 2 metres of *Helianthus giganteus* which flowers a month earlier.



I'll be sowing two varieties, *Helianthus annuus*

'Italian White' and 'Valentine'. Both of these grow to 5 feet and are also excellent cut flowers with white and pale yellow flowers respectively. I'll also sow another batch two weeks later to make sure I have flowers at slightly different periods.

This will additionally help to replace any that have suffered from slug and snail damage. I don't personally use slug pellets but if you do, please try to make sure that the active ingredient is ferric phosphate and not metaldehyde, which is very damaging to our much loved wildlife and other animals. There are, of course, other options for deterring slugs and snails such as biological controls, copper bands or tape, sharp gravel or crushed egg shells and coffee grinds or beer traps.



I'll continue to deadhead spring flowering bulbs and bedding such as violas and pansies, which stops the plants wasting energy by trying to produce seed and can encourage more flowers. I am adding well rotted manure to my veggie plots around fruit trees and flower beds, adding nutrients back into the soil and improving the drainage. I am also trying to keep on top of the weeding, the most common of which are speedwell, wood haven and hairy bittercress.

Carey Tunstall

Martin Page

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1			2		3		4
5							
			6				
7							

1 Across: Easter animals **1 Down:** State of equilibrium **2D:** Nor **3D:** Single figure **4D:** Mount as a shelf
5A: Fishing spear **6A:** Pig **7A:** Lobule pendant
Paul Towers 2021

Answers at w:westernparkgazette.co.uk

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7		8		3	6	5		

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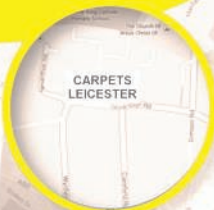
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