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## Hello From The Editor

The shocking explosion and fire that took the lives of five people and injured five more on Hinckley Road has created a groundswell of sympathy and support from Leicester's West End community.

We pull together in a time of tragedy; it's what we do around here; doing the best we can in times of need.

From one of the first people on the scene - a man who, in the freezing cold, directed traffic away from the site in his slippers - to those nearby who reacted immediately and with their bare hands, dragged the injured free of the burning rubble. Also, we had the emergency services who got stuck into dampening down the fire and then began the painstaking task of sifting through the pitiful remnants of a family home and a shop.

There is, as we all know, a lot to be proud of locally, and yet these facts simply bypassed certain social media pond life who claimed the explosion was caused by a jihadi bomb factory...columnist Helen Knott has her own thoughts on these people.

Life, of course, has to return to normal, so we carry on. In this issue of the Gazette; Roger Blackmore reveals the story behind one of Leicester's greatest philanthropists. Tony Huxley shares with us how to deal with a frozen garden and a locally made short film gets its debut. There's also the local policing update and the crossword and sudoku on the inside back page.

**Find us on Twitter @mygazette & Facebook by searching for the Western Park Gazette.**  
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To Contact - Call 07939 115 724  
 e:editor@westernparkgazette.co.uk  
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# Events Diary

**Fosse Coop Camera Club:** Fri. St Peter's Ch Centre, Westholme St. 7.30pm. [fossecoopcameraclub.co.uk](http://fossecoopcameraclub.co.uk)

**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.

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

**Relaxed Dru Yoga Sessions with Emma:** Sunday's Term time: 7.15 - 8.30pm. St Anne's Hall. 07393 811150.

**Walking Group:** Sundays. 2pm. 69 Deg. B-Gate.

**Pub Quiz:** Monthly - last Tues. WE Brewery.

**Upstairs At The Western in March:** 19th: **Uncle**

**Armando**, 21st: **Find the Right Words**, 24/25th:

**The Carrot Nappers**, 28th: **Choir Night**, 4th April:

**Emily Harrison.** [upstairsatthewestern.com](http://upstairsatthewestern.com)

**Matilda the Musical:** Curve: Until 24th March. An

Officer & A Gentleman - 6-23 April. [curveonline.com](http://curveonline.com)

**Flash Dance:** DM Hall 26-31 March.

**Frost/Nixon :** Little Theatre. 9-14 April. **My Fair**

**Lady** 17- 21st April. [littletheatre.net](http://littletheatre.net)

**Pop-up Beer Fest:** 16 March. Hall at St Anne's

**Pop-up Tea Room Fundraiser:** 17 March. Hall at

St Anne's. 10.30-2.00pm.50p. Kids' FREE.

**Homage à Trois Rumours:** Y Theatre. 24 March &

**The Nose That Nobody Picked.** 32 March.

**Stand Up Comedy in Western Park:** 21 April. Hall

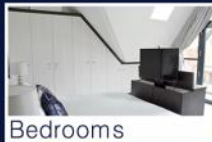
at St. Anne's. 7.30pm. Tickets from Eventbrite.

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# WE PULL TOGETHER

The explosion that ripped through a Hinckley Road building killing five people, including three members of the same family, proved our community can all come together in times of tragedy for the common good.

At 7.00pm on February 25th, a quiet Sunday evening, lives were changed forever as an explosion tore through the Zapka supermarket. The blast rocked houses for half a mile in all directions bringing people running to the scene to help drag victims from the rubble and give first aid. Business owner Aram Kurd claims he crawled out calling for Viktorija Ljevleva who was on her second shift at the store. Viktorija, Mary Rajoobeer and her two sons Shane and Sean, and Leah Beth Reek, Shane's girlfriend, perished when the blast destroyed their flat and the building collapsed in on itself.

Gas pipes ruptured and flames took hold, adding to the danger faced by the fire crews as they battled the blaze and clear debris from both sides of Hinckley Road.

It was a bitterly cold night but immediately our West End community rallied round offering help where they could; pulling the injured from the building, directing traffic away from the scene before emergency services arrived and later bringing hot food and drinks to the exhausted police & fire crews.

As Hopes of finding survivors faded and the awful scale of the damage became apparent, local people were there supporting those left without homes and businesses, and for the emergency services as the traumatic work of carefully sifting through the rubble for remains began.

Five people were injured in the explosion, one seriously, and they were taken to hospitals in Leicester and Nottingham. It was several days before the names of the missing were released.

In the meantime, 60 residents had to leave their homes and nearby businesses were shut to give the emergency services space to work. A community assistance point was set up at St Anne's Church by Leicester City Council and local people were quick to donate everything from nappies to dog food.

An in-depth forensic investigation to find the cause of the blast was started by fire investigators in conjunction with the police. By Monday 5th March three men were charged with manslaughter and arson. Two others were arrested & released on conspiracy to cause an explosion and offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act. One of those charged with manslaughter and arson is the shop owner Aram Kurd.

**More on Page 6**





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The emergency services were overwhelmed by the response from the community and charity groups, who went to the scene of the explosion in Hinckley Road, offering hot drinks and refreshments.

Staff from the emergency services painstakingly worked around the clock for two nights in sub-zero temperatures searching for survivors before starting the harrowing search for more human remains.



Tammy Hill from the Crows Nest (Pictured above) arrived with tea, coffee and food and the offer of an overnight stay at the pub for those evacuated, the volunteer Rapid Relief Team provided hot food and drink to emergency responders. They arrived at 11 pm on Sunday night and worked in snowy conditions

feeding officers at the scene until 7pm the following evening. They were joined by The Midland Langar Seva Society (MLSS), which normally feed the homeless and stayed throughout the early hours.

Local business have pitched in to help. Supermarkets and takeaways brought supplies to officers - one family turned up with a homemade cake and another with a box of chocolates.

Superintendent Shane O'Neill said; "We are very humbled by the efforts of members of the local community to support our officers, fire and rescue staff and paramedics who have been working in freezing weather.

"Something hot to eat and drink can make all the difference when emergency responders are working in extreme and harrowing conditions and are cold and tired and can really help them keep their energy levels up.

"We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has been kind enough to give up their time to help."



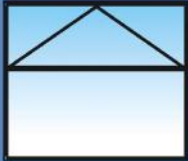
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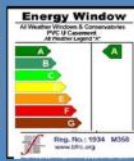
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# KNOTT'S LANDING

I'm proper angry. Convulsed with outrage. After witnessing the awful events on Hinckley Road recently I did what we all do these days; I checked out social media to see the latest news. There, on my screen pinged up a torrent of bile and hatred aimed at my home town.

The erstwhile leader of the British National Party, and some UKIP chump were tweeting saying the explosion had to be a jihadi bomb factory because Leicester is a multicultural city. We won't even talk about the comments on the Daily Mail story.

I went from concerned to nuclear rage in seconds. The police had just asked people not to speculate on the cause of the explosion. In spite of this these publicity seeking hate mongers were racially profiling my street and publically saying the explosion had to be caused by Muslim terrorists.

I will admit to going into a twitter frenzy: "This is my street, my community and my people and you know NOTHING about us. This is a diverse area with more nationalities living in harmony than ANYWHERE else in the UK. #Leicester is an example to the rest of the country in how to get it right."

I haven't felt this strongly about something for a very long time and calling out both of them for

their bigoted behaviour was a decision, I could have just let it go and ignored them. (Oh alright you can stop laughing now... we all know that would never happen). I also fired back politely at a number of people who thought it was the right time to tell me I was a minority in my own city, like this is somehow a problem.

Leicester has been good to me. I've met lifelong friends, made a home, a baby and a career here. My neighbours are a rainbow of cultures and ethnic backgrounds and when we need to, we all help each other. This is my community and it's diversity and breadth is a beautiful and precious thing. I will not have someone parachuting in trying to sow the seeds

of hatred and trying to screw it all up for those of us who live here. There is too much pork pie, curry, kebab, samosa, barfi, sausage and cake at risk. Try it sunshine, and you take on me and my army... and I will win.

© **Helen Knott**

Find Helen on twitter @helenjknott



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## Cake! Community! Consultation!

Save the date for the up and coming Pop-Up Tea Room on Saturday 17th March in St Anne's Church Hall from 10.30-2pm, and all in aid of community fundraising on behalf of WWCE. A big thank you to Helen Pearce, Beth Waite, Nicole Garrett & Clair Robins for all their efforts in putting on what will be a fabulous community occasion!

Come along and meet members of the team, talk to us about the project and put your ideas forward on a post-it note and add to our consultation board! We will also be running our own fundraising craft project for all the family to enjoy, getting you out, active and spreading positivity as we enter the spring season! If you miss it, don't worry, look out for information via local schools in the Ward shortly after the event.

We look forward to seeing you there!



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**ReFIESTA is an entirely home-grown, Leicester-based and volunteer-run initiative, aiming to inspire positive behaviour change for a greener city and a cleaner planet, through local festivals and events.**

Our message is that sustainability does not have to be hard work – or even get in the way of a good time.

Simply making small changes to the way we do everyday things can make a big difference to our carbon footprint. And local celebrations are a great environment to try something new.

So what are you waiting for?

We are two West Leicester ReFiesta volunteers, and would like your help to make our own Western Park Festival a little bit greener. We are aiming to pilot an on-site washing up service to reduce waste from disposable plates etc. So we are looking to source the equipment needed for this. If you have spare picnic ware - plates, bowls, cups, cutlery (including metal cutlery) that you are happy



to donate, please get in touch via [refiestaleicester@gmail.com](mailto:refiestaleicester@gmail.com) Also looking for small to medium clean water containers (15 litres plus) washing up bowls; the loan of a festival trolley and gazebo. In addition to these items we would be grateful for any offers of help with washing up. Please get in touch via email or Facebook if you can help out. **Alternatively ring Sally on 0116 285 5793, or text 07972 316 060, or ring Mel on 0116 254 9420 or text 07804 017 587.**

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To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of World War One, individuals and groups in Braunstone are joining together to create a *Cascade of Poppies*.

Local crafters from across Braunstone and the surrounding areas are sewing and knitting poppies which, when fixed to a mesh, will cascade down an exterior wall at Braunstone Civic Centre. The cascade will then flow out along the ground up to and around the War Memorial in the garden at the Centre on Kingsway, Braunstone Town. The community aim to make **14,177 poppies** to commemorate each of the Leicestershire men who died as a result of the conflict.



All types of craft poppies are needed (except card or paper – the display will be outside in November...) and we would welcome anyone to join us, whether you want to make one poppy, a dozen or more, and perhaps to tell us their stories of their relatives who lived during World War One.

The group also wants anyone who wishes to donate red knitting wool, fabric or any camouflage type netting to please get in touch.

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Despite his spending so much of his life in manufacturing industry, he never lost his interest in nature, wildlife and the countryside and his ultimate gift to the city and county of Leicestershire was priceless.

Charles Bennion served his apprenticeship in Crewe and as a young man was to travel the world as a ship's engineer.

He later joined the family firm, Pearson and Bennion, which merged with the United Shoe Company of America to form the British Shoe Machinery Company Ltd.

He was to serve as Managing Director of BUSM from 1899 until his death in 1929. The factory, just off the Belgrave Road, at its height employed over four thousand people and was for many years the largest employer in Leicester. Its personnel director for a number of years, Mr Cox, was the father of British Tennis star, Mark Cox.

Interesting, a look at a map of LE4 reveals the site of the old factory along with streets harking back to the products once made there including Moccasin Avenue, Sandal Avenue and Brogue Street. There is even The Charles Bennion Way

connecting them.

Bennion and his wife Marianne lived just outside the City at Thurnby Grange, a house which he either had built or had greatly expanded. (Thurnby Grange was sold to the then Billesdon District Council on the death of his widow in 1939). It was the site of the local air raid siren during the second world war.

An active Freemason, Bennion involved himself in various philanthropic projects, including the provision of a number of open spaces and wildlife protection. When Leicester City was struggling to buy the Bradgate estate, which the Grey family were selling up in the 1920's, he was the man who stepped in and secured this much loved open space for all time.

A few yards in from the Newtown Linford entrance to the park stands a granite stone and plaque, stating that Charles Bennion's memorial lies all around. Tens of thousands of visitors can testify to this every year.

Charles Bennion is quite simply immortalised in granite.



*Roger Blackmore*

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Mr Barton has suffered with a hearing loss since the young age of 8 years old, so has been using hearing aids for most of his childhood and adult life.

Just before Christmas he accidentally dropped his hearing aids in the toilet (we are almost all guilty of dropping objects such as mobile phones down the loo). Panicking on how he would manage to carry on through his day to day life without his hearing aids, he used some 15 years old NHS hearing aids that have been in the draw to see him through- unfortunately having no luck, continuing to struggle.

Hear4u ordered Mr Barton some Unitron Moxi Fit 600 as requested by the customer. These were received next day and Mr Barton was booked in for a home visit delivery as soon as possible.



Our fantastic audiologist arrived at Mr Barton's house prompt with all the equipment needed, including his new hearing aids!

Paris professionally fitted the hearing aids and made sure Mr Barton was comfortable with the fit and settings of the aid. From the moment of the hearing aids being switched on Mr Barton said he could hear his wife talking to the dog in the kitchen. Mr Barton had not heard certain sounds for a long time, for example if people are in a different room having a conversation. He could also hear the wind and the rain on the conservatory roof- again something he could not hear with his old hearing aids.

Mr Barton was delighted he was receiving his new hearing aids in the comfort of his own home, not having to go outside of his comfort zone or worrying how he will travel to his appointment. Paris was very thorough explaining procedures and the technology of the hearing aid, for example; how the hearing aids work, plus how to change wax traps, batteries, domes and what is included in the Hear4u package.

Mr Barton is over the moon with his hearing aids, how they fit, how they look- they are smaller, sleeker and better sounding compared to his old hearing aids.



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## LETTERBOX



Dear Editor: Dog walkers are lovely people especially the ones who walk with their pooches on Western Park. A couple from Glenfield who accompany Willow on his travels was talking to my husband recently. He admired Willow's wonderful knitted coat. (It's been very cold, even for dogs) Barley, our dog, looked on enviously. 3 days later there was a knock on the door and there stood the same couple with a coat for Barley. They wouldn't take any money or even come in for coffee. I'd love to thank them properly so if Willow's human mum and dad read this THANK YOU. It was so kind of you and Barley thinks he's top dog on the Park, behind Willow of course.



**Wendy & Barry**

Dear Editor: I am sure the photograph I have included in my letter will not get published, as it is likely to make people 'uncomfortable'. To be honest I feel uncomfortable attempting to navigate my kids to school everyday around Dorchester, Kingswood and Ainsdale road due to the increasing amount of dog poo on the streets. It is getting ridiculous. I feel like I have to tackle an obstacle course every morning attempting to arrive at school without having slipped or stepped in it.

The dogs are not to blame, we all know it's the inconsiderate owners, but how does the council fine people, is there a dog fouling officer on the beat? If so they could take visit around these local roads.

**Disgusted Local Resident**

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Locally made short film Débutés at Duffys Bar

## 1979 PREMIER

Not a white rose in sight at the premiere of the short movie 1979 and the only “me toos” were those in the audience who had been collaborators in the films. Aside from an outlet for his mania one of Mark Cooper’s principal aims was to make a very local film. Supporting the main event, Av Singh’s Eastwood raised some laughter with a somewhat younger and lesser known Clint. In contrast the filmpoem “Adieu Mankind”, shot by Tom Knight, brought a darker tone to the evening. Mark’s rewrite of Shakespeare’s “To be or not to be”, complete with soul cleansing in the river Lin at Bradgate Park, calls for Homo sapiens to call time on humanity and stop making babies.

1979 culminated with femme fatale Kathleen prophetically stealing Ray Marlow’s Trimphone as our anti-heroine pioneered later spates of smart phone robberies often reported in our very own Police Update.

The response to 1979 was overwhelming, there weren’t enough seats, and by the time of the main screening some were sitting on the floor.

In response a second screening has been arranged at PoloneZ Bar, 56 Hinckley Road on Friday 16th March at 7.30 p.m. Just turn up.



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Share Your Views on a Possible 20mph Speed Limit in the Letchworth Road and Dovelands Primary School Areas

## ROAD SAFETY STUDY STARTS

The Council is starting a study to determine the feasibility of implementing a 20mph speed limit for the Letchworth Road and Dovelands Primary School areas, and have commissioned Arcadis to take forward this work. This will include public consultation and subject to feasibility preparing design proposals.

An important first step is to understand the views of local residents and business owners, specifically with regard to the implementation of a 20mph speed limit and potential installation of associated physical measures. At present, no proposals have been put forward. Local opinions will provide an invaluable input to this process. The study will investigate the residential roads bounded by Letchworth Road/Perth Avenue, Aikman Avenue/Petworth Drive, Henley Road/Woodville Road, Hinckley Road, and Western Park Road. However, at this stage Aikman Avenue/Petworth Drive, Henley Road/Woodville Road, Glenfield Road, and Hinckley Road are not planned to be part of the study area itself.

Arcadis invites local residents to share views on any issues and opportunities that might exist for this area. Representatives from the project team will be available during the Western Community Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018, from 7pm onwards. There will be an opportunity to share views and ideas, and Arcadis staff will be available to help capture these on a location map. Thoughts ideas and contributions can also be emailed to:

LetchworthDovelands20mph@arcadis.com

For further information regarding the venue and agenda, please go to [www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk) Select 'Meetings' and then 'Western Community Meeting'.

**Peter Siemensma**



**20MPH  
SPEED LIMIT**

## CATS - THE MUSICAL AUDITIONS

The Leicester Theatre Group on Poole Road is searching for young talent for their new production of *Cats the Musical*.

They're also holding full singing auditions but the main dancers will only be expected to hold a tune.

The age limit is 10yrs for the kittens and up to 21 (on or before March 17<sup>th</sup> 2018) for the Cats.

Fees payable for the show cover everything including costumes and can be paid in instalments.

If you have a great voice and can dance, choose a date and book yourself in by emailing:

leicestertheatregroup@gmail.com **Sun March 18th 2pm - 6pm & Sun March 25th 2pm - 6pm**





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# March Police Update

Detectives investigating the murder of 24 year old Ashley Johnson who was found stabbed on Dannett Street have arrested a 22 year old man on suspicion of murder.

Ashley was found fatally injured on Dannett Street at 3.42am on Saturday 24th February. Detective Inspector Jon Blockley said: "...our enquiries are very much continuing and we urge anyone who has any information and who hasn't yet made contact to get in touch."

The Fosse policing team are aware of some complaints about street drinking in the area and have conducted an operation in February educating people and checking licensed premises. Officers have the power to remove alcohol from persons if they are drinking in public and are engaged in anti-social behaviour.

The Westcotes Policing team have been out and about over the past month focussing on licensed premises. We have visited over 100 establishments checking they are adhering to and displaying their licence conditions. This work is ongoing so please let us know if you have any concerns, regarding the sale of alcohol / knives to U18's.

Talking of knives, Leicestershire Police is committed to reducing the numbers of incidents involving knives and those carrying such as weapons. This is a priority and something we all have a responsibility for to ensure the safety of our community, especially the teenager groups. Please pass any information (confidentially) regarding those you know or suspect regularly carry a knife – it could save a life.

We have seen a number of reports of discarded used needles across the Westcotes area over the past month. We are working closely with the Leicester City Council to identify these and have them safely removed, as well as other educational work with our partners to try and improve the situation. If you do see any needles in a public place please contact the City council cleansing team. Any needles on private property may incur a charge for their removal.

Officers from the New parks area continue to focus on knife related crime and ASB. A number of warrants have also been recently completed, with more planned over the coming weeks. Again please pass any information you have to your local Neighbourhood officer, PCSO or contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

On March 27th from 6pm-8:30pm the Fosse policing team and City Council will be holding a Community fair at Newfoundpool Working Men's Club on Beatrice Rd. Numerous local services will be in attendance to give information to visitors about the local services available for them. We hope to see you there! **Sgt Chris Schofield**



# Tony Huxley's Compost Corner



Last week I was admiring the first daffodils of spring, and then we were thrown right back in the chiller. Hopefully your tender perennials are somewhere sheltered or fleeced over. Temperatures have been cold enough to kill back plants like Cordylines and scorch Choisya, and snow fall has been heavy enough to tear limbs from unpruned conifers. Like the pragmatic folk that we aren't, we're all looking for someone to blame and the forecasters have chosen Siberia. The "Beast from the East" is one unwanted gift that seems to have crippled the country more effectively than any cyber subterfuge.

So, what has Siberia ever done for us gardeners? Well we could argue they have given us some extremely tough, useful and beautiful plants to use. As a contrast to a wintry backdrop you can't do much better than Siberian dogwood, *Cornus alba siberica*, with its crimson stems. Varieties of the



Siberian dogwood

larger and more robust Siberian willow, *Salix acutifolia* are popular in amenity planting schemes where they're copied to encourage an attractive screen of decorative stems and feathery plumes of foliage.

On a smaller scale, Siberian bugloss, *Brunnera macrophylla*, is a favourite choice for ground cover in shady spots. Its foliage is often silvered (e.g. varieties such as "Jack Frost"), and it has sprays of blue forget-me-not like flowers. And how can we forget the Siberian squill (!) a dainty sky-blue bulb that will quickly colonise a border.

Most gardeners have grown *Erysimum*. This tough little plant is known as the Siberian wallflower. Its hardiness and bright orange flowers make it a popular early bedding plant. *Trollius asiaticus* is another great Siberian native with hot orange puff ball blooms.

But my favourite has to be the Siberian Iris. This plant may be robust in character, but its foliage and vivid blue flowers have a delicacy and finesse that most of the gaudy flag irises seem to lack.

So not everything from the East is beastly.

© Tony Huxley



Erysimum

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# Martin Page

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1		2		3		4
	■		■		■	
5						
	■		■		■	
6						
	■		■		■	■
7						

**1 Across:** Tuberos plant **1 Down:** Broken **2:** Cyber criminals **3:** A titanic hit **4:** Plant Sources  
**5:** Large heavy knife **6:** Old man **7:** Plans.  
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5	4						7	
		7	6	9				
			1					8
	7	6		8				
		5	2	1	9	6		
				7		3	8	
2					1			
				3	4	8		
	5						1	4

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