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Issue: 130
January 2014

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Editor's Comment



THE state of some of the roads in Culcheth, Croft and Glazebury is clearly becoming a matter of major concern judging by the number of reports we are receiving from readers who have had a bad experience.

It would also appear that Warrington Borough Council and their insurers are saying they are not liable for any damage caused by pot holes.

Apparently if the roads are inspected and pot holes are not evident at the time of the inspection - the council can not be held liable if a pot hole appears and you unfortunately drive into it!

With damage normally running into a few hundred pounds most people will probably feel it is not worth employing the services of a solicitor to challenge these decisions.

With the council facing further cut backs in the next financial year - to the tune of £17 million - I fear we may see a further deterioration in council services - as existing cuts and "efficiency savings" over the past three years run to the tune of around £46 million!!!

With the council still able to find money to give staff pay rises - is it any wonder that there is little left in the pot to provide the necessary maintenance of our highways.

Some of these pot holes are so bad I fear that sooner or later we will be reporting on a fatality.

I know local councillors are doing

their best flagging up these issues and we will carry on reporting on them and flagging them up to the powers that be.

If there is anyone out there who has successfully taken action over damage caused by a pot hole please let us know - as sometimes the only way to make people sit up and take notice is by hitting them in the pocket. You can email us at info@culchethlife.com

**Deadline for the
February issue
of Culcheth Life
is January 21**

Film night to continue

CULCHETH Educational Trust are delighted to once again giving a grant of £600 towards the local PCSO's initiative of running a Film Night once a month at Culcheth High School for the youth of the villages.

Local councillor Keith Bland said the Trust believed scheme, which is attracting over 60 young people, is very worthwhile and would like to thank all those staff and volunteers who are making it possible.

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Holly helps St Rocco's dance it's way to £30,000

CULCHETH based former Miss England finalist and local businesswoman Holly Ikin was one of 10 amateur dancers who took to the stage for "Strictly St. Rocco's" raising a staggering £30,000 for the Warrington based hospice.

Holly (pictured right) and the other novice dancers from across



Pictures: Matthew Fisher

Warrington had their own Strictly experience in learning how to dance with their professional partners!

After months of practicing, the dancers finally took to the dance floor at Mere Golf & Country Club in front of judges Warrington Wolves' star Ben Westwood (pictured left), Beryl Rigby, Ralph Casson and The Mayor of Warrington Cllr Peter Carey.

More than 350 guests attended the event and after judge's scores had been given and audience votes had been counted the winners were announced.

Winner was local reporter Vicki Stockman and dance partner Jamie Sloan who wowed the judges with their Viennese Waltz, while Holly and dance partner Chris Savage, who performed a cheeky Cha Cha and got the guests up on their feet, came runners up.

Special

Hospice Matron, Alison White commented: "Strictly St Rocco's was a very special night! It summed up everything about St Rocco's that is so special- it captured the hearts and minds of the community and over £30,000 towards patient care

at the Hospice. We would like to thank everyone who attended and the ten dance couples who were brave enough to put themselves through the experience!

"Special thanks must go to our sponsor Jones Lang LaSalle and to Cadman's Dance Centre, whose support and expertise made it all possible.

"The judges and hosts also did a superb job on the night. All in all - a real night to remember!"



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Birchwood College students look to the future

BIRCHWOOD College is once again busy preparing Year 13 students for life after college.

The college's sixth form centre has an overall pass rate of 98% and last summer 75% of students met or exceeded their target grades.

The university application process is well under way and the college is delighted that one student has already secured an interview at Oxford University.

This year students have applied to a variety of universities including Durham, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester and UCLan.

The College provides a strong Information, Advice and Guidance programme. Students have regular meetings with their tutors, Head of Year and Head of College, as well

as discussing their options with the college's full-time Student Services & Guidance Co-ordinator.

This term students have received advice on applications from the Education Liaison Officer from Edge Hill University and a number of interested students had the opportunity to visit Burnley Football Club to find out more about the degree course in Business & Sports Management, an exciting new course which they run in conjunction with the University of Buckingham.

College Head John Burnham said: "We know that students can be faced with a myriad of information at this stage in their college lives and here at Birchwood we aim to ensure that every student

makes a decision that will be right for them. All our students are treated as individuals and they are guided carefully through the decision making process, whether it be applying for university, apprenticeships or employment."

Last year 95% of students gained their first choice place at university, with students moving on to study a range of different courses including journalism, human geography, nursing, business studies, accountancy & finance and sport.

Birchwood College, however, recognises there are many different progression routes and staff work hard to make sure students move on to do what is right for them. James Evans, for example is one student who took advantage of a different



opportunity and he is now on a four year graduate apprenticeship with Sellafeld Ltd following success in his A levels.

Ladder exchange event puts safety first

LADDERSTORE hosted its first Ladder Exchange Event locally to encourage people to change their old, dodgy ladders for brand new ladders whilst offering advice on how to work at height safely.

Held at Taylor Business Park, the Ladderstore team provided discounts, advice (and bacon butties!) to anyone who wanted to scrap their old ladders for new ones.

Carl Oates, Sales and Marketing Manager who braved the cold

dishing out new ladders and advice on ladder safety said: "As one of the UK's largest distributors of access equipment, we encounter a lot more poor practice than we would like whilst watching people work at height.

"Often the quality of equipment being used is some way short of the quality we would expect to see when people work at height on a daily basis. Damaged ladders contribute towards an increased risk of falls while working at height.

"We saw the Ladder Exchange as a great opportunity to ensure that people have the opportunity to dispose of their old and damaged ladders, buy replacements at a discount and ultimately save money while increasing safety."

Local councillor Paul Campbell called in to show his support at the event.



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Victorian Day hailed great success

THE annual Culcheth Victorian Day has been hailed a great success by local councillors.

The annual event saw crowds gather in the centre of Culcheth to support a range of events, including stalls, a fairground, Santa's grotto – and, of course, the official “switching on” of the Christmas lights.

The event was organised by local charity Birchwood Lions, with support from Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council. All money raised goes towards good

causes, including financial support for the local pensioners Christmas party. At the climax of the day, carols were performed in the Methodist Church and a fireworks display drew an enthusiastic response from the crowds who stayed to watch.

Culcheth Library arranged for a display on the Victorian era, with historical photographs of some of the village's oldest buildings. Art and creative writing competitions had also been run with local schools, and Borough Councillor Chris Vobe was on hand with Parish Council Chair Jacqui Johnson to present certificates and prizes to the winners.

Parish Councillor Matt Smith said: “This year's Victorian Day represented another successful day for the village, and was warmly received by visitors of all ages. At the end of the day, Santa arrived to switch on the lights around the green to signal the start of the Christmas celebrations. The Parish Council would like to extend our thanks to all the businesses who threw themselves into the spirit of the occasion and helped to boost trade in the centre of Culcheth by getting involved.”

Borough and Parish Councillor Chris Vobe added: “It was a pleasure to join the Parish Council Chair to present certificates and prizes to the winners of our art and creative writing competition. The Parish Council has always been keen on involving the younger members of our community in the many events and activities we have in the village, and this year's competitions were another way of showcasing local talent as part of the celebrations.”




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Chronic Pelvic Pain

PELVIC pain symptoms may have a debilitating individual impact on a woman's life and tailored care should be considered. Around 15% of women experience symptoms of chronic pelvic pain at some point in their lives, and for them appropriate specialist advice is very important.

Gynaecological causes of chronic pelvic pain lasting for more than 6 months (chronic pain) may differ at different chronological stages of life. An ultrasound scan of the pelvis should be one of the first investigations to be arranged, but other tests may be requested to assess the bowel and bladder. In over half of women with chronic pelvic pain if a gynaecological cause is suspected a laparoscopy (keyhole surgery) is performed for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.

The commonest gynaecological causes of chronic pelvic pain include: endometriosis (lining of the womb growing in other places inside the pelvis), adhesions (clingfilm-like scar tissue caused by infections, previous surgery or endometriosis), ovarian cysts (benign or malignant masses of different size) and some types of fibroids (benign hormone dependent tumours that grow in the uterus and vary from the size of a pea to a grapefruit).

Superficial vulval pain, experienced on the outside of the vagina rather than deep in the pelvis, is a less common symptom, and can relate to infections, dryness, nerve damage and some skin conditions. This type of



Luciano G. Nardo MD MRCOG, Director GyneHealth, Consultant gynaecologist and reproductive surgeon, Centre for Reproductive Health, Daresbury Park, Warrington

pain has no relationship with the menstrual cycle, and can occur during sexual intercourse.

Non-gynaecological causes of chronic pelvic pain may be associated with problems in the bladder or bowel, and/or musculo-skeletal, nerves and psychological issues.

Women can't do anything to prevent ovarian cysts, endometriosis or fibroids causing pelvic pain symptoms, but better

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Garden centre set to embark on second phase of development

BENTS Garden & Home is set to embark on Phase 2 of its £10m vision for the future.

The family run garden centre will begin work on the latest stage of its mission to become the North West's ultimate garden, home and leisure destination in early January.

The latest stage in the Bents' journey includes major extensions to existing departments and the addition of a number of new leading brand concessions; together significantly enhancing the amount of retail space at Bents. Work will also commence on the construction of a new roundabout on the A574, Warrington Road.

As part of the works, the award winning Fresh Approach Restaurant will undergo a major extension and the popular Food Hall will double in size to include a several fresh deli counters. Both the Children's Boutique and Pet Care department will increase in size with plans for a groom room and pet café.

MD Matthew Bent said: "We've come a long way since the Bents' business was established by my grandparents nearly 75 years ago and the journey so far has been hugely enjoyable. Feedback on the work we've carried out to date has been extremely positive and despite growing in size we want to retain all the great things we already do. We want to keep the great feeling and ambiance we

have worked hard to create, but in a bigger store."

"Whilst never forgetting our gardening heritage we've worked hard to create a destination that is no longer just focussed on the garden but also encompasses home, lifestyle, leisure and a day out. The latest stage of our journey aims to build on the work we've done so far and help us reach our ultimate mission; a one stop shop which provides visitors with a quality alternative to large scale shopping centres, without losing any of the choice, quality, levels of service or family friendly environment that we have established a reputation for."

Phase 2 plans also incorporate a number of community initiatives demonstrating the wider role the Centre plays. Work on an extensive children's play area and community allotments will be complete in late 2014, which - along with the new roundabout - will provide the village of Glazebury with an attractive and welcoming entrance feature.

Once work is finished plans will get underway for the third phase of development, which will include a 2 storey glazed atrium and striking new entrance area which will tie together various elements of the project and complete the new look Bents Garden & Home.

Former chief returns to top job



FORMER Croft resident Prof. Steven Broomhead has been appointed chief executive of Warrington Borough Council on a permanent basis.

Councillors voted him into the job at a meeting of the full council.

Professor Broomhead - who held the post previously before becoming chief executive of the former North West Development Agency - has been acting as interim chief executive since June last year after the resignation of predecessor Diana Terris.

The post was advertised nationally and the council's chief officer employment committee interviewed shortlisted candidates in November last year, but could not make a unanimous decision and resolved to re-advertise the vacancy.

The committee was again unable to make an appointment in October this year despite a competitive market.

It was then agreed to ask Professor Broomhead to stay in post on a permanent basis.

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The Gardening Guide JANUARY

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- Pots & bowls of Hyacinths, Daffodils, etc that have been outside may be given a little heat to encourage early flowering.
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Council insurers refuse to pay for pothole damage

AN angry motorist has hit out at highway chiefs after council insurers refused to pay out for damage caused when his car hit a large pot hole on a recently re-surfaced road.

Local businessman Mark Buckley struggled to keep control of his Audi car after it hit the pot hole on Heath Road, Croft, when he was driving towards Culcheth with his partner and daughter.

The car suffered two ripped tyres and damaged alloys, causing hundreds of pounds worth of damage.

"I was very fortunate that I didn't lose control of the vehicle," said Mark who runs a telecommunications company based at the Taylor Business Park, Risley.

"Fortunately no one was injured - but it could have been a lot worse.

"I think it is a disgrace that only two weeks earlier the road had been resurfaced at both ends, but this sizeable pot hole and others had been left to endanger road users."

"I was very fortunate that I was able to stop safely and that no further damage was caused to the vehicle and most importantly those in it!

"I can't believe the council insurers are saying they are not liable."

A council spokesperson said: "We're very sorry that this

gentleman suffered damage to his car. But we're unable to admit his claim because the council was not at fault.

"The council does have a robust inspection process for our roads, but even so some deterioration will occur in some places between inspections. The law is clear that it would be unreasonable to expect the council to know about every



pothole as soon as it appears.

"We're always grateful when people report potholes to us, and we would urge regular users of a particular stretch of road who spot damage occurring to let us know. People can report potholes online by going to www.warrington.gov.uk/potholes. Also the council

has a smartphone app to help make it even easier for people to report potholes, just by visiting our website via their phones."

"Roads do continuously deteriorate and there will sometimes be additional wear and tear adjacent to a repair."

Passenger could have been killed!

CULCHETH Councillor Paul Campbell has yet again been contacted by a resident complaining about the state of the roads around the villages of Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft.

On this occasion the resident and her passenger friend were returning to Culcheth via Croft after work.

While driving along Smithy Brow near Croft in November, a roadside grate which was obviously in a dislodged state shot upwards as the wheel of her car passed over it. The grate then struck the passenger side of her car causing an estimated £1,300 damage. The woman passenger told Cllr Campbell that if the grate had gone a little higher it could have smashed the window where she was seated and that the force was such that she felt lucky to be alive. The owner of the car contacted Warrington Borough Council claiming damages but was told by their insurers that the Council did not accept any negligence as the grate in particular had been checked in May and found to be ok. The resident noticed that the day after she complained the council were out at the scene repairing the road and grate.

Cllr Campbell said: "To say the resident is angry is an understatement. She feels as I do that the Council is avoiding its responsibilities and that there appears to be a very obvious case of negligence on the Councils behalf. I have advised the resident to seek legal advice and to appeal the Councils decision. The fact that I and many other residents and Councillors have been warning the Borough Council regarding the state of the roads in this area seems to be totally ignored. I am asking that the Council Highways Department take these complaints more seriously and that a special task force be set up involving local Parish Councils to deal with the issue as a matter of urgency."

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The Autumn Statement - what does it mean for you?

George Osborne delivered his 2013 Autumn Statement on Thursday 5th December and whilst a large part of this related to minor changes to tax bands and allowances, we've identified a few areas that we think could be most relevant to you.

1. Transferrable tax allowances:
 - From April 2015 married couples/civil partners will be able to transfer £1,000 of their personal allowances to each other provided neither is a higher rate taxpayer.
 - Sadly the restriction to £1,000 means the maximum potential income tax savings are £200 pa per couple
2. National insurance (NI) exemptions:
 - To encourage employment of under 21 year olds, from April 2015 no employer NI contributions will apply to their

- salaries (provided they earn less than £42,285 pa).
 - This means employing a 20 year old on a salary of £15,000 will cost an employer circa £1,000 less than under current rules.
 - However if the employee earns less than £8,000 pa then it will make very little difference to the employer
 - From April 2014 most employers will be given an allowance of £2,000 pa for NI contributions for their total workforce (regardless of age)
 - The employer's NI payments will be reduced each month until the limit has been reached.
3. Capital gains tax (CGT) relief on property reduced
 - We've written previously about Principal Private Residence (PPR) relief which can reduce or eliminate entirely CGT on a 2nd property provided it was your home at some point.

- From April 2014 the amount of relief will be reduced (unless you have always lived in the property) so reviewing your property portfolio before then is crucial.

Please contact Sarah Salton at Styles and Co on 01925 761600 to discuss further.



Sarah Salton.

The Styles Files are provided by Styles & Co, if you would like further information call 01925 761600

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LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE IN COUNSELLING SKILLS Thursday 16th January 2014 – Cost £799

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All of the courses listed are available FREE OF CHARGE (material/resource costs do still apply) to those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance and/or the Employment Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group only). If you are requesting a concessionary fee for a course, you must enrol in person and bring evidence of your receipt of benefit with you (The evidence that you provide must not be older than 3 months – Please note that an appointment card is no longer acceptable)

ENROLMENT DETAILS

To enrol onto any of the courses listed above you will need to attend our enrolment evening on **Thursday 9th January 2014 between 5-7pm**

For more information please contact either Stephen or Joan;

Stephen Toole 01942 767040 Ext 4 or email Stephen@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk

Joan Jones 01942 767040 Ext 4 or email jonesj@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk



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www.lowtonhighschool.co.uk

for a full breakdown of our course programme

Campaigner calls for more action at 'speeding hot spots'

LOCAL campaigner and Parish Councillor Matt Smith has called for urgent action to be taken in areas of the village where speeding is prevalent.

His call comes after visiting residents on Broseley Avenue, Culcheth, who told him of their worries that the stretch of road from Wilton Lane to the junction of Hob Hey Lane was being used as a rat run.

Some residents have experienced problems reversing out of their own drives due to the speed of oncoming cars.

Cllr Smith said: "Broseley Avenue is just one area of the village where speeding traffic continues to pose a risk to people's safety. It is crucial that we recognise these hot spots and take action accordingly."

"That is why I continue to bring these matters to the attention of local

police, through the Parish Council's Law and Order Subcommittee, which I chair.

"Residents have shown commitment to resolving this issue by setting up a speedwatch group. I now feel the borough council should make use of 'golden ribbons' which can be placed on the road, and used to measure the speed and frequency of traffic. This helps the police identify the

particular times when the problem is most acute and station officers there accordingly."

Meanwhile Cllr Smith has extended his thanks to residents on Broseley Lane for a warm welcome and for taking the time to speak with him about the problems. He has pledged that he will pursue this issue and ensure that the appropriate speed watch is carried out.

School celebrates Thanksgiving



PUPILS and staff at Glazebury C of E Pre School and reception class dressed up as Pilgrims and Indians to celebrate an American Thanksgiving which included a turkey dinner for lunch.

Girl fell from zip wire ride

A LITTLE girl fell from a zip wire on the Croft playing field when the seat fitting broke.

She was not seriously hurt, but a subsequent examination of the ride indicated that it might have been vandalised.

Now members of Croft Parish Council have ordered an independent investigation to try and establish whether the accident was caused by vandalism or whether the equipment had a fault.

It was only about 12 months old and had been inspected only three months previously when the accident happened.

Parish council chairman Cllr Les Hoyle said: "We are taking this incident very seriously. If it was an act of vandalism it is the latest in a series on the Croft play ground."

"The toilets have twice had the locks broken by someone who must have been using bolt-cutters and if some kind of tool would have been needed to damage the seat on the zip ride."

"We also had an incident when someone set fire to two swings, including one for disabled children."

"All the damaged equipment has been taken out of use while repairs or replacements are awaited. It is only about a year ago the playground was upgraded at a cost of £40,000 so this is very disappointing."

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Highways chief invited to take a drive down Mustard Lane!

CROFT Borough and Parish Councillor Chris Vobe has invited the Assistant Director of Environment and Regeneration to take a drive down Mustard Lane this January, to see for himself the extent of the pot holes and defects which affect the road.

Councillor Vobe is responding to numerous complaints from residents, who have spotlighted the road as one which would benefit from resurfacing.

He said: "The council faces unprecedented cuts to its budget, courtesy of the Coalition Government. Nevertheless, I am committed to making sure that roads in Croft which are worst-affected by pot holes are given adequate attention.

"That is why I have invited senior council officers to join me on a drive down Mustard Lane. After traversing the innumerable pot holes that are still present in this part of the village, the challenge will be for them to tell me whether they think it's good enough for people in the village."

Cllr Vobe points out that some repair works have already been carried out in the Mustard Lane area, but he believes the Council can go further.

He added: "Some works have already been completed, which have helped with the worst areas. But these have been "patch up" jobs as opposed to a complete resurfacing. That is what I want to see done, and I will continue to agitate at the Town Hall for funding to be allocated."

Councillor Vobe has promised to update residents in the village after the drive is complete. He has joked that he will bring the contact details for the council's insurers for the officer – just in case!

New members wanted

CULCHETH Age Concern Centre Whist Drive Group is looking for new members and are starting free tuition sessions in January.

The normal Whist Drive takes place every Monday 1.00pm – 4.00pm at the Jackson Avenue Day Centre and costs £1.50 including tea/coffee & biscuits.

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