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Magazine

ISSUE 211 | MARCH 2021
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Editor's Comment



IT is sad to report that the annual community day has been cancelled for the second consecutive year due to the COVID-19 - especially at a time when we can see light at the end of the tunnel of this terrible pandemic.

The charities and community groups who benefit from the annual event will all have suffered loss of income streams during the past 12 months.

But the reason for cancelling the event is fully understood with COVID social distancing restrictions not expected to be lifted until at least June 21st IF everything goes according to plan with the vaccine rollouts and pressure easing on the NHS.

The May Bank holiday is just too soon especially when new infections are still being reported.

For some reason the Culcheth, Croft and Glazebury areas of Warrington have seen higher rates of infection than some other areas of the town, although these are thankfully on the way down at time of press.

With schools returning on March 8th we will have to see what happens as from previous lockdowns the spikes show a clear correlation with schools re-opening. Hopefully with the vaccines starting to make an impact this time, we won't have to endure another full lockdown.

Here at Culcheth Life, it has been difficult to keep a free publication going, although we are starting to see some green shoots of recovery,

which hopefully will be good news for other businesses in the local community when they can start to reopen from April 12.

If you are an established business getting ready to reopen or a new one starting out - don't forget Culcheth Life is much more than just a print magazine.

Linked to the warrington-worldwide website and various social media platforms we have the ability to reach out to many thousands of potential customers of all ages.

We certainly look forward to returning to some kind of normality in the coming months and hopefully

by all working together we can help the economy get back on its feet!

Finally a big well done to all those amazing community volunteers out there who have done so much to ensure those in need have not been left behind.

Keep up the good work and stay safe.

Deadline for the April issue of Culcheth Life is March 23



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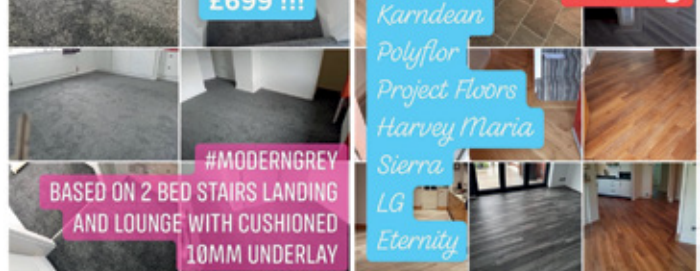
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Culcheth Community Day cancelled for second year running

CULCHETH Community Day – normally held at the beginning of May – has been cancelled for the second year in succession.

Cllr Peter Holmes, chairman of organisers Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council said: "It is with regret that we have unanimously voted to cancel this year's Community Day.

"It is the second year running it has had to be cancelled due to Covid, but due to the restrictions in place it would be impossible to run the event in a safe manner.

"We know that charities are

struggling at this time, and we were hoping that it would be able to proceed, as significant sums are raised for local charities, but it has become clear recently that things will not be back to normal by the beginning of May in time for the event.

"We are hopeful that Community Day will be back in 2022."

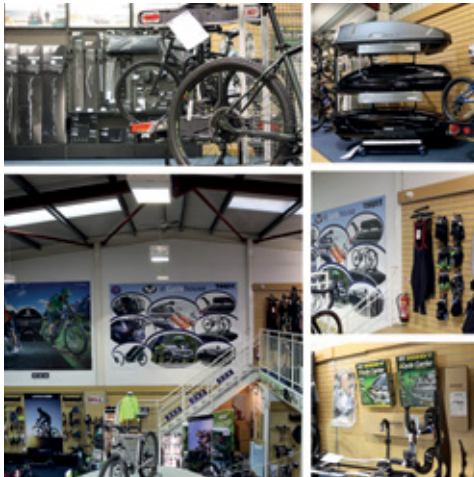


Thinking of a holiday in the UK? Then BAS & Cyclehouse have got it covered!

With the situation as it currently is, many of us will be starting to think about our summer holidays and the reality of what this might look like. The truth is, nothing is certain at the moment, however many of us feel safer and more secure in planning a UK break, as opposed to our normal foreign holidays and if this is you, then here at BAS and Cyclehouse, we've got you covered!

It is no surprise that caravan sales have dramatically increased in the last year and one leading caravan sales company said that 71% of caravans sold in June last year were to first time buyers. There is no doubt that staycations are on the rise and could be for the foreseeable future. Our wide range of towing and leisure accessories will help you to get the most of your break and ensure that happy memories are created, in what has been a very challenging time for all.

If you are looking at towing either a caravan or trailer or using a towbar bike rack, then BAS can provide you with all the towing adaptations/accessories you will need, including a full fitting service for towbars and electrics. We have a huge range of cycle carriers to accommodate all vehicles and budgets, ensuring that you get the right option for you. If it's water sports you're interested in, then we also have a wide range of water sports



carriers and accessories, perfect for that adventure break. Our range also includes a wide selection of roof top boxes, ideal if you are travelling with family and need that extra storage space.

Cycling has played a huge part in many people's 'lockdown lives' over the last year and its popularity certainly isn't showing any signs of slowing down. Cyclehouse have a huge range of bikes available to suit all ages, levels and budgets and they also provide a repair service, ideal for tuning up the bikes that have been sat in the garage over winter.

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Barn conversion plan in grounds of historic hall

PLANS have been submitted for the reconstruction of part of an agricultural building in the grounds of historic Holcroft Hall Farm, in Holcroft Lane, Culcheth.

The farm is a Grade 2* Listed Building dating from the late 15th or early 16th century.

It is believed to be the house from which Maria, or Mary Holcroft, married Captain Thomas Blood, after eloping with him in the 1600s. Blood later became the infamous "Colonel Blood" who attempted to

steal the Crown Jewels in 1671.

But the farm building subject of the planning application is of modern construction, having been built on the site of an earlier, dilapidated barn in 2008.

Reports presented to borough council planners indicated the building has no historic significance

and the changes proposed will have no impact on the historic hall.

The plan is to convert part of the building for residential purposes, adding a number of windows and doors.

It is intended to restore some of the pre-2008 building's features.

*Colonel Blood, an Irishman described as one of the biggest rogues in history, attempted to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London, posing as a parson. He failed and was arrested but was pardoned by Charles II, who apparently admired his audacity.

BAS win prestigious Vehicle Adaptation Service of the Year Award

LOCALLY based BAS is celebrating after winning a prestigious Vehicle Adaptation Service of the Year Award for the North West.

The Corporate Livewire Manchester and North West Prestige Awards 2020/21 recognise small and medium-sized businesses that have proven to be the best in their market over the last 12 months.

All shortlisted companies are asked to support their nomination with evidence of their work, positive feedback from their clients, information on previous accreditations and recognition, as well as highlighting the most outstanding parts of their business.

The judging panel base their decisions upon areas such as service excellence, quality of the product/service provided, innovative practices, value, ethical or sustainable methods of working, as well as consistency in performance. The winners selected are those who can demonstrate their strengths in these areas.

Speaking on the award, BAS Owner and MD Bill Bradley said "We are thrilled to be recognised with this award. The whole team work extremely hard to provide the best possible service for our customers and it is great to have this recognised by the Prestige Awards."

Road closure for new pedestrian crossing

Part of Common Lane, Culcheth, will be closed for up to six weeks while construction works take place for a new pedestrian crossing.

The road will be closed from its junction with Wigshaw Lane to its junction with Lodge Drive for a period of up to six weeks.

Warrington Borough Council has made a Prohibition of Driving Order under Section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

The Order will be effective from 1st March 2021 for 6 weeks, between 9:30am and 3:30pm, Monday to Friday, when signed on site.

Access will be under the control of the relevant Contractor for the duration of the works.

The alternative route will be via A574 Warrington Road, A580 East Lancs Road, Newton Road and Kenyon Lane.

The closure is required to allow for the construction of a Pedestrian Crossing.

Brownies zoom back into action at Culcheth

CULCHETH Brownies are back – after being forced to suspend meetings last year because of the pandemic.

They are now meeting on Zoom every week and the girls have been really enjoying it.

Brownie leaders dropped off a Zoom pack to each member so they knew what they needed each week and activities were adapted so they could be done online.

They even learned new games provided by Girlguiding to play each week. They met family pets, siblings and saw and heard what the girls had been up to.

Many Brownies kept busy at home completing interest badges and one, Eleanor, managed to complete so many badges she earned a special badge called the Bronze Award.

She received her badge and a celebratory balloon to say well done.

Eleanor said "I've really loved

the chance to carry on with Brownies on Zoom. In some ways, I like it more because the meetings are more special and I like my family being able to join in. I look forward to it every week. I was proud to receive seven badges and my Bronze Award; it was a great surprise and I don't know how my family kept it a secret from me! I'm excited to start my next badge, painting daffodils, and I'll share it with my friends at the next Brownies meeting. No one can stop me now".

Girlguiding in Culcheth have lots of girls waiting for places in Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. Anyone who feels they could give a couple of hours a week to allow more local girls the opportunity to develop new skills, make new friends and have adventures, should contact Justine Doyle, Girlguiding Culcheth District Commissioner – email: justinedoyleguiding@outlook.com

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HS2 gets the Royal nod - moves closer

The HS2 Phase 2a Bill has been given Royal Assent cementing in law the Government’s commitment to bring the high-speed railway to the North – and closer to Culcheth!

The Act of Parliament was passed exactly one year after Ministers gave the project the green light. It will allow HS2 Ltd to begin work on constructing the next phase of the new high-speed railway between Crewe and Birmingham, creating thousands of jobs.

Campaigners at Culcheth are still hoping the controversial Golborne link (Golborne Spur) can be axed from the project, removing the threat of major environmental damage in the village and elsewhere in Warrington.

Construction of the first stage of the project between the West Midlands and London is already underway and is now supporting more than 15,000 jobs and 500 apprenticeships.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Whatever your view of this project, HS2 is now a reality – heading north, creating jobs and building a brighter future for our country. This vital project is at the heart of the Government’s commitments to build back better from the pandemic, tackle the North-South divide and drive growth across the country.”

“The signing of the Phase 2a Bill into law is an historic milestone for this ambitious project, which is already creating and supporting thousands of jobs across the UK. I look forward to seeing spades in the ground to get this section built and deliver the benefits of high-speed rail to the North as swiftly as possible.”

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said: “HS2 has been consistently backed by northern leaders, businesses and MPs, so I’m delighted that its construction to Crewe – an iconic railway town – has been signed into law.”

“Construction of Phase 2a will offer a wealth of contract opportunities for local businesses and generate thousands of jobs across the region.”

“Once built, HS2 will be a catalyst for regeneration for the West Midlands, Staffordshire and Cheshire, providing benefits for the great towns and cities across these regions for decades to come.”

Trevor Brocklebank, Deputy Chair of the Cheshire and Warrington LEP said: “This is a landmark moment for the Cheshire and Warrington economy. The LEP is determined to ensure that this once-in-a-generation opportunity is maximised as a major pillar for growth in the region.”

“I was very pleased to speak to HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson on a virtual roundtable where I emphasised our strong proposals for a HS2 Growth Corridor – which will deliver 8,800 jobs, 30,000 homes and 6m sq ft of commercial space – from Crewe to Warrington.”

“The first Northern extension of HS2 will have a catalytic impact on Cheshire’s economy and also help deliver the levelling-up agenda, allowing us to address areas of deprivation in our region.”

Construction of the first stage of the project between the West Midlands and London is already underway and is now supporting more than 15,000 jobs and 500 apprenticeships.

Now that the Phase 2a Bill has been signed into law, HS2 Ltd will be able to start environmental works along the route with construction expected to begin on this section by 2024.

Construction of Phase 2a is expected to support around 5,000 jobs, with many more in the supply chain. In addition, the railway will support 140 permanent jobs at its maintenance base near Stone in Staffordshire.

It comes after HS2 Ltd marked National Apprenticeship Week by announcing that it will be directly recruiting for 30 new apprentices to join the company in September.

Once built, HS2 will become the spine of the UK’s rail network, better connecting the country’s towns and cities and boosting capacity to provide better journeys for passengers.

Early this year, the Government will publish its Integrated Rail Plan, which will outline how HS2 can work with existing rail plans and Northern Powerhouse Rail to deliver the benefits of HS2 to the East Midlands, Yorkshire and

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CULCHETH LEADS THE WAY FOR THE NORTH WEST WITH FASTEST EVER BROADBAND

Exciting first for Culcheth as ground-breaking Future Fibre connectivity arrives in the village.

Culcheth is set to be one of the first places in the country to get the fastest and most reliable broadband connection ever offered to UK homes and businesses.

And Culcheth people are being invited to be among the first in the country to experience it for themselves by signing up for a free trial.

TalkTalk's Future Fibre is 45 times faster than standard broadband, with average speeds of 500 megabits per second.

Future Fibre from TalkTalk offers unprecedented levels of connectivity, opening up whole new possibilities for local people and local businesses.

Where existing fibre broadband uses a mixture of fibre and old fashioned copper phone wires, Future Fibre uses fibre cables all the way to the home or business, a technology called Fibre To The Premise (FTTP).

This means Future Fibre broadband speeds are many times faster and more reliable than anything that has been available until now.

For Culcheth, this means average broadband speeds of an astonishing 500Mb/s compared to the 50Mb/s that is currently available for the average home or business in the village.



With faster and more reliable access to such huge amounts of data, many people in the same home will be able to do everything from downloading big gaming updates to streaming Ultra HD and 4K TV all at the same time, while, for those working from home, it will allow crystal clear video-calls with colleagues or with family and friends.

It means everyone can rely on ultrafast speeds on laptops, tablets and everything in between – even when they are all being used at once.



TalkTalk
For Everyone

This connectivity has never been more important than it is now with the pandemic forcing us all to spend more time at home, which has put a huge strain on the old-fashioned broadband connections that many people rely on.

Families and business users have all experienced the frustrations that can bring, with slow speeds or unreliable connections affecting how easily we can work from home or how many people can use their own devices for work or play at the same time.

But Future Fibre is solving that problem!



Download big gaming updates with ease - even when everyone is online.



Stream Ultra HD and 4K TV in multiple rooms at once.



Rely on ultrafast speeds across laptops, tablets and everything in-between.



Crystal clear video-calls with family, friends and when working from home.

Now you've read all about the amazing opportunities being opened up by Future Fibre in Culcheth, how would you like to be among the first in the country to experience it for themselves?

TalkTalk is inviting local residents and businesses to register for a FREE TRIAL of Future Fibre broadband.

It's faster and more reliable and allows many people to use the same connection at the same time without affecting speeds or stability.

The trial comes with no strings attached. After the trial period is over, there is no obligation to remain with the broadband provider but, with TalkTalk being committed to offering value to the Culcheth community, it guarantees that no other provider will offer the same service at a lower price.

The trial is available for a limited period, so to take advantage of the offer, simply scan the QR code on the front page and register your interests ASAP.

All registrations must be received by 31st March 2021.

TalkTalk
For Everyone

Neil, Director of Freedom Fibre and TalkTalk's Innovation Director talks about what the Culcheth launch means to him.

TalkTalk's Innovation Director Neil McArthur, is an expert in online connectivity and was one of the driving forces behind Future Fibre being introduced to Culcheth.

To connect Culcheth to this new future-proof, ultra-fast, stable and reliable broadband, TalkTalk is working in partnership with Neil's new business Freedom Fibre, to offer the new era of connectivity to the Culcheth community.

As a local man, he was keen that the village should be among the first in the UK to experience this new era in connectivity, which is an issue that is very close to his heart.

Why is Culcheth so important to you?

I was born near here and have lived locally all my life. It's an amazing community and I'm so lucky to still live nearby.

Why are you so passionate about Future Fibre coming to Culcheth?

Future Fibre is such an exciting development and, living locally, I've seen at first-hand what a difference faster speeds and greater reliability could make to Culcheth.

Like most people, I've been working from home and there have been lots of occasions when I've been making a presentation and lost connection to the meeting, only to find my kids have jumped on their console to play online with friends!

Better connectivity is really going to change things for local people. I was really pleased when it was confirmed that the Culcheth would be one of the first villages in the UK to receive it.

What do you think are the real benefits of Future Fibre?

In my job as Innovation Director, I have seen many changes and advancements in broadband over the years but this is genuinely next level. We haven't seen speeds like this before and it allows us to do so much more online. With so many people able to use the same connection at the same time across different devices, there are huge opportunities to improve the way we work and play online.

Why is it so important to be innovative and stay ahead?

My job involves being ahead of the next trend, being passionate about the opportunities the future holds and predicting what is going to come next. Whatever innovation is on the horizon, it is bound to be powered by fast and reliable connectivity so the new opportunities offered by Future Fibre are crucial to staying ahead.

What impact will Future Fibre have on the local community in Culcheth?

The new normal has really changed things for us at work and at home. Broadband connection has been an issue for some people during this time but Future Fibre genuinely makes a difference.

With people using different devices at the same time to work, play or just relax at home, connection speeds and reliability have definitely been a source of frustration at times, but the introduction of Future Fibre in Culcheth will certainly reduce stress levels for local people who sign up.

Remember too that connectivity is one of the things that many house buyers look for when choosing a new home. Future Fibre will definitely put Culcheth on the map when it comes to broadband connection, but it could well boost house prices in the village too!

For more information or to sign up for the UK's fastest, most reliable broadband technology, visit talktalk.co.uk/culcheth or scan the QR code to register your interest



TalkTalk
For Everyone

Royal Assent – and to Culcheth



beyond. CADRAG, the Culcheth and District Rail Action Group, argues that the Golborne Link, which would link HS2 near Lymm to the existing West Coast Main Line, north of Golborne, is too expensive – it could cost more than £3 billion – and cause immense damage to the local environment, jobs and amenities.

Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council work with CADRAG to oppose the Golborne link because of the damage it will do to homes, businesses, environment and traffic. Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols has launched an online petition also opposing the Golborne Link.

Meanwhile TSSA General Secretary, Manuel Cortes, has welcomed as “absolutely vital” the go-ahead for the next phase of High Speed 2 (HS2).

Phase 2A of the rail project – from the West Midlands to Crewe

– was given Royal Assent earlier today.

Cortes, the transport and travel union boss, said: “This is very welcome news because HS2 is absolutely vital for our country in so many ways. I’m delighted that those living in the areas which will be part of Phase 2A are going to see the long-term economic and green benefits of this major project.

“Make no mistake every step forward on HS2 is an important moment for Britain’s railways. High-Speed rail will deliver a state-of-the-art railway and bring much-needed capacity to our creaking infrastructure.

“When it comes to high-speed rail Britain is decades behind our European neighbours and other countries. Now we must see HS2 not only completed in full, as planned, but extended all the way to Scotland.”

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Simon Box,
Plant Area Specialist

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METAS

Planet Doughnut takes off at Bents

Bents Garden & Home has teamed up with a fellow family business to further enhance the offering at its popular patisserie counter.

Artisan bakery, Planet Doughnut was established in 2017 by husband and wife team, Duncan and Samantha McGregor and has proved to be a huge success with flavours including Salted Biscoff, Cadbury Caramel, Terry's Orange, Rolo and Aero Mint to name just a few.

A selection of these delicious, freshly made doughnuts is available from Bents' patisserie counter every Saturday.

Meanwhile a brand-new virtual service to help make shopping for garden furniture a little easier during these changing times has also been launched.

For customers who are looking for a new piece of garden furniture, but would rather shop from the comfort of their own homes, a virtual personal shopping appointment with one of Bents' experts is the perfect answer.

Bents' outdoor living experts can talk customers through this year's extensive collection, from furniture suites to parasols and BBQs, and help choose the perfect look to bring style and comfort to the outside areas of the home.

As well as suggesting the best products to suit style, space and household requirements Bents will ensure all measurements are taken and checked to ensure products will suit needs and available space.

Appointments can be booked by calling the store on 01942 266300 extension 461 or 462, to speak with one of Bents' outdoor living colleagues and book a time which is convenient to meet virtually.

Days & Times available

Appointments are currently available on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Time slots available: 9-10am, 10-11am, 11-12pm, 4-5pm



Villagers ridicule "temporary" repairs at flood bridge

REPAIR work carried out to deal with flooding on the A574 under Chat Moss Bridge, Glazebury has been ridiculed by villagers.

The work consists of covering a grid with tarmac – a grid which is supposed to take surface water and PREVENT flooding.

Local residents took to social media to ridicule the work carried out by Warrington Borough Council.

Culcheth and Glazebury parish councillor Sue Bland said: "The road under this bridge is always flooding. It has been going on for years. It has been particularly bad this winter, with all the rain we have been having.

"When residents saw the repairs



they couldn't believe it. The grid which is supposed to stop flooding occurring has effectively been blocked, which means if there is more rain the situation will be even worse.

"I have been on to the council and have been told it is only a temporary fix and that a permanent repair will be carried out soon. But if we get more rain and the grid is covered by tarmac it will surely make matters worse.

"I think the trouble is that the drain can't take the amount of rain we have been getting and the floodwater backs up from the grid. But I can't see how covering the grid with tarmac is going to help!"

A Warrington Borough Council spokesperson said: "A defect was reported to us on February 23 and due to the nature of the issue, temporary emergency works were carried out. A permanent repair has been programmed to reinstate the gully."

*Last month Culcheth Life reported how local farmer Dan Broster, using a tractor and tanker, cleared an estimated 58,000 gallons of water from under the bridge.



Theresa wins 18-month apprenticeship

CULCHETH'S Theresa Divers, aged 18, has been appointed apprentice administration assistant at Cerberus Receivables Management in Salford.

Celebrating her arrival during National Apprenticeship Week, Theresa is the company's latest recruit - joining the specialists in recovery and realisation of distressed assets and debt with three A-Levels – and a desire to pursue a career in a fast-paced professional services environment.

Her appointment will see her assisting with office management and administrative duties, as well as supporting the senior team with an ever-growing workload. During her 18-month apprenticeship, her professional responsibilities will be combined with studying for her City and Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration.

The company recruited Theresa through The Growth Company - one of the largest providers of work-based learning for young people and adults. The not-for-profit company has already supported thousands of young people who want to kick-start their careers and achieve their full potential.

Director, Christine Greenhalgh said: "Theresa is a very welcome addition to our team and we're especially pleased to be bucking the trend when it comes to recruitment in what are these unprecedented times.

"We're told that the pandemic has brought about a 50 per cent decline in UK apprenticeships, which is such a shame when you think about the huge pool of bright, ambitious and

new young talent out there.

"Build the Future' is the theme for National Apprentice Week - the 14th to be held. And that's exactly what we're doing here. Theresa's apprenticeship will be for 18 months. During this time, with our support, she will achieve her formal City and Guilds qualification. We'll also be providing her with additional training and CPD opportunities and supporting her career progression within our team. Our commitment is

most definitely long term."

Theresa said: "I was so keen to get real-life, hands-on professional services experience after completing my A-Levels, and I'm really pleased to have been taken on by CRM.

"The company is professional, agile and at the top of its game, and I've learned so much already. The practical day-to-day experience really supports my classroom-based learning and I'm really looking forward to what the next year and a half has in store for me – not to mention the great foundations it builds for my career."



Planners give go-ahead for farm's Spanish tunnels

PLANNING chiefs have given the go-ahead for an ambitious scheme to meet the growing demand for pick-your-own soft fruit at Kenyon Hall Farm, Croft.

They have approved plans for a phased development of 13 additional Spanish tunnels.

The farm – which has long been selling direct to the public – already has seven poly tunnels which have extended the season for picking soft fruit to 5-6 months, compared to the traditional method of growing in the open, which is still practised on the farm but has a season of only 6-7 weeks – less if the weather is bad.

But despite the existing tunnels, the farm has struggled to meet demand and has, on occasions, been forced to ration fruit.

The farm also produces arable crops, including potatoes and cereals and during the COVID-19

lockdown have been able to continue to safely supply fresh fruit and vegetables to local families.



LEGACY

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COMING SOON TO CULCHETH

Gully cleaning, COVID testing and parking petition

LOCAL Cllr Val Allen has welcomed surface water and gullies being cleared by Warrington Borough Council, along with a new COVID testing facility in the village.

She has also welcomed the parish council's support to try and resolve parking issues at Round Thorn.

"After the dreadful floods brought about by storm Christoph, it is great to see WBC out and about in Croft and cleaning of these drains has been something that has been brought to their attention many times in the past and a plan of regular maintenance is needed to avoid this happening again."

Cllr Allen also welcomed the use of Croft Youth Activity Centre being used as a Covid-19 testing facility.

"This is very welcome in the village and will enable carers and those who cannot work from home to get a rapid test" she added "the organisation for testing sites throughout Warrington by the NHS has been amazing and I would like to thank all involved for their hard work in keeping us safe".

Meanwhile parking issues on Round Thorn in Croft have been a problem for residents for many years and Cllr Allen welcomed the Parish Council's support for residents in trying to get Torus and WBC to come up with a solution.

"This has gone on for many years with residents being passed from pillar to post, it is time to resolve this issue once and for all

and provide safe off-road parking to avoid an accident and to allow service vehicles access should there be an incident."

Cllr Allen added: "For two decades the residents of Round Thorn have suffered terrible parking conditions which is getting progressively worse year on year as the number of vehicles continues to grow."

"After a very wet winter, residents have been forced to park on a muddy grassed area and everyone is at their wits end with the danger to health and wellbeing."

"Carers have been restricted in reaching the sick and elderly, residents have fallen over, cars have become stranded in the mud bath and subsequent double parking on the road means that emergency vehicles would be unable to reach a fire or serious medical emergency. We have children and residents with serious disabilities who are being put at serious risk. A petition has been signed by all impacted residents requesting that action is taken by Torus together with Warrington Borough Council to provide more parking by repurposing the grassed area to parking spaces, to avoid a terrible incident taking place."



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Lions' funded van gives huge boost to all Helping Hands branches

Founder of Helping Hands Culcheth Glazebury & Croft Wendy Maisey OBE has expressed her delight at the delivery of a new van funded by Warrington and Birchwood Lions.

Wendy said: "We've struggled for some time and always had to reach out to our volunteers specifically requesting estate cars and vans for some of our larger deliveries or donations."

"Tony Gandy of Warrington Lions has seen how difficult things were especially over the Christmas period. The Lions have backed

Helping Hands from the beginning and always on hand to support and guide us.

"The delivery of this van has become an absolute game changer in what we can achieve locally for the most vulnerable in our community during the Covid-19 pandemic."

"We're overwhelmed by the generosity of Tony Gandy and Pam Dyson of Birchwood Lions so on behalf of all of the Culcheth Glazebury and Croft branch and the whole of Warrington, I'd like to say a huge thank you!"



WI goes cruising on the Mekong – via Zoom

ROGER Lamming – husband of Croft WI president Anne Lamming – gave a talk entitled “Down the Mekong” at the monthly Zoom meeting of the WI.

It was about a river cruise on the Mekong while travelling through Cambodia and Vietnam in 2018.

The Mekong river is half-a-mile wide in parts and is a hive of industry, with fishermen, boat traders and homes on stilts along its banks. The river cruiser called at most of the large cities along the Delta from Phnom Penh in Cambodia to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in Vietnam.

The temples shown in Roger’s photos were spectacular and one was used as a location for the film “Lara Croft Tomb Raider”, the temple being practically engulfed by weird and wonderful tree roots and with faces carved into tall towers facing north, south, east and west - meaning the faces could see in all directions.

In that part of the world there is a shortage of protein in the average diet, so to make up for this the markets are full of baskets of dried insects including scorpions, ants, tarantulas, grubs etc., which are all a source of protein and the locals consider these great delicacies.

Roger mentioned a particular meal they enjoyed at their hotel – beef in red ant sauce - apparently you could feel the ants crunching when you chewed!

The local people were very friendly and their main form of transport was either a motorcycle or scooter, or the Asian “Tuk-Tuk”. Traffic jams were horrendous and no-one seemed to know who had the right of way. The people seemed to accept this as part of their daily life, probably because they feel they are living in a reasonably stable society, in comparison to the terrible life they endured in Cambodia under the rule of the Khmer Rouge and during the war in Vietnam.

One photo showed a very friendly fisherman in Cambodia who had told Roger an extremely harrowing story of when he was a nine year old living under the rule of Pol Pot.

Even at that young age he had a gun placed in his hands and was told to kill dissidents from the regime. He said he didn’t

want to do it, but had no choice and just closed his eyes. He also told of interrogation and torture of innocent people and other horrendous acts in which he was forced to participate

The pictures of the Killing Fields in Cambodia were gruesome, showing hundreds of skulls and bones, the skulls colour coded to show how the unfortunate person had died, either beheaded, shot, or some other awful form of execution.

There are numerous monuments there today, as a tribute to the hundreds who died and the people want the world to know how they suffered during those terrible times. The people of Vietnam also suffered tremendous hardship during the Vietnam War in which the North invaded the South and the US went in to fight against the Communist North.

There are museums showing the impact of the defoliation campaign that used Napalm and Agent Orange, which is still having an impact to this day through the genes of ongoing generations. The Vietcong from the North used miles of underground tunnels to escape from the Americans if they were losing a battle and these opened out to vast caverns underground, which could contain field hospitals etc.

These tunnels can still be accessed today and an intrepid Roger was shown clambering down into one. There was an amusing notice which stated “do not enter if you are afraid of the dark”. Apparently it was pitch black and like a manhole chamber and you had to crawl on your hands and knees in places!

There were ventilation holes made from wide stems of bamboo. Scores of booby traps were laid containing large metal spikes in order to impale enemies and the Americans stood no chance against this type of warfare. In fact at the end of the Vietnam War neither side really won. During the country’s recovery, lots of foundations were set up for orphans and tourism continues to support these charities.

Jill Hillam thanked Roger for an extremely interesting talk.



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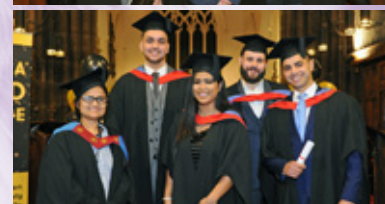
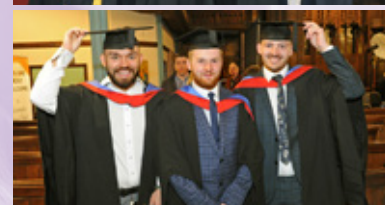
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