

Culcheth Life Magazine

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Business brisk at the Raven

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WHILE it was fantastic to see the reopening of Culcheth Library – it was hugely disappointing to see the political fallout it created.

I'm sure most readers don't want to see the local community library become a political battlefield.

This is not the reason we elect local politicians who should be putting their political differences to one side and working together for the benefit of the local community.

Politics is toxic enough on the international and national levels. We don't need it at a parish level.

I know the political machines mean people often align to a political party to get elected – but once elected the party colours should be put away until election time.

If you are a good hard working local Cllr. you will stand a good chance of getting re-elected.

I don't want to see nasty politics at a local level – and I have been around long enough to know most residents are like-minded people.

Moving forward I hope our local politicians can put their differences to one side and work together to ensure the community library is a success.

On a more positive note, it was fantastic to step back inside the new look Raven Inn at Glazebury following an absence of nearly five years.

I have to say it was a heart-warming experience to step back inside a traditional British Pub,

enjoy good, home cooked food washed down by a fine ale.

My hosts Bob Eden and Peter Sturman looked after me very well and from all accounts business is brisk.

Having followed this story from day one it was very rewarding to see the hard work and endeavours of Bob, Peter and the community team come to life.

While I am confident business will remain brisk up to Christmas it is important that once the dark cold nights of January and February come along, that residents continue to

support this fantastic community facility.

A huge investment has taken place to get this pub back open so remember to use it so we don't lose it again!



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Business brisk at the Raven Inn with good customer feedback

JUST over a week after re-opening its doors for the first time in nearly five years, business was brisk at the new-look Raven Inn at Glazebury.

Following the lengthy campaign to save the historic pub which has seen two developers seeking to demolish it and replace it with housing and the building falling

into a state of disrepair, the Raven Inn at Glazebury is now back in business.

Spokesperson Peter Sturman said: "It has been a long, sometimes

difficult, journey. Hundreds of people have contributed to this moment.

"The Raven has been very busy since opening, the feedback from our patrons has been very good.

"There have been some snags – we had to set to sorting out the drains that had not been used for so long. There were some electrical issues in our brand-new kitchen, when it was put to the test, for the first time. Not surprising really.

"Our chefs and staff all had to

hit the ground running, we are still looking for some chefs and bartenders to add to the team.

"As a community pub, it would be great to provide job opportunities to local people.

From the start we have delivered on what our community wanted: a dog-friendly community pub, providing good home-cooked food.

Peter added: "As things settle down we will start to introduce more community-centred initiatives at the Raven Inn."



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Tory sees red as Labour accused of making library reopening political

A TORY Cllr has seen red after Labour Cllrs. celebrated the opening of the new-look Culcheth Village Library following investment and refurbishment by Warrington Borough Council.

While local Labour party activists blamed Tory Government austerity for almost bringing about the closure of the community facility, local Conservative Borough Cllr Wendy Maisey said it was "deeply saddening," to see Labour Parish Councillors "politicising a great community achievement like this" in her ward.

She accused them of turning a blind eye to a "flawed consultation" and almost allowing cherished village services to be shut, with only the sheer force of the backlash from local residents forcing them to do a u-turn.

Culcheth Village Library reopened recently, welcoming back residents after it was closed for refurbishment earlier this year in March.

Local Labour party members say the investment and renovation, headed up by the Labour-led Warrington Borough Council, has modernised and refreshed the library whilst also creating a new much-needed community space for local residents.

They say it follows "brutal cuts" to local government funding by the Conservatives when more than 800 libraries across the country were forced to close, stifling learning, culture, and communities.

Despite austerity, Labour councillors say they made a commitment to library services and have planned to protect and sustain library spaces, recently announcing a new strategy to transform library services across Warrington.

They added that since 2021, Conservative councillors in Warrington had voted against investments in local libraries by voting against the council's annual budget.

Libraries are still a popular destination with recent data showing nearly 550,000 visits to libraries in Warrington and nearly 500,000 books borrowed between 2019 and 2020.

Libraries do more than just lend books, they improve computer and digital literacy and offer free access to the internet, they improve social mobility supporting users to reach their full potential and they offer opportunities to combat loneliness by providing activities such as reading clubs to support some of Warrington's most vulnerable residents.

Cllr Christine Smith, Local Labour Parish Councillor and Friend of

Culcheth Library member said: "I've been a part of Friends of Culcheth Library since 2017. I'm proud of what we have achieved and how far our village library has come.

"We secured additional opening hours and have supported many community groups within the library including jigsaw groups and Lego groups for the little ones, bringing in more people to enjoy our library.

"Conservative cuts to council budgets put our library at risk, however, your local Labour parish and borough councillors committed to keeping our library open, investing in its refurbishment and its future.

"I'm thankful to all the colleagues, volunteers and friends who have supported us to keep this important community resource open.

Cllr Ben Aldred, Local Labour Parish Councillor and Friend of Culcheth Library member added: "The refurbishment and reopening of Culcheth Village Library is a true success for our community.

"In the face of brutal budget cuts by the Conservatives, that led to the closure of over 800 libraries nationwide, Labour councillors in Warrington ensured Culcheth wouldn't become another casualty of Conservative austerity.

"Labour's commitment to our libraries has transformed this space into what I hope will be a thriving community hub once again.

Cllr Tony Higgins, Warrington Borough Council Cabinet Member for Leisure and Community said: "I'm pleased to announce Culcheth Village Library has now reopened following Labour's investment in the library to refurbish, modernise and create a new community space.

"Labour promised to keep this vital community asset open and we have delivered on that promise.

"It's no secret that Conservative cuts to local authority budgets have closed hundreds of libraries up and down the country.

"I'm pleased to say that here in Warrington we are transforming our library services to better meet the needs of our communities."

But Cllr. Maisey, pictured below at the opening with colleagues, responded: "It is deeply saddening to see the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Community and Labour Parish Councillors politicising a great community achievement like this in my ward.

"After visiting the library's

opening, I took to social media to thank all involved for working so hard and having a vision for a renovated library in our village.

"Friends of Culcheth Library is an A-Political group and a huge asset to the community, this statement released by Labour is mistimed and has undermined a great success story.

"It's obvious that Parish Cllr's Aldred and Cllr Smith were not familiar with the restricted covenants on Culcheth library at the time of making such a bold statement or simply chose to ignore them.

They should remember that, back in 2016, senior Labour councillors were willing to roll over and have their bellies tickled by LiveWire rather than stand up and fight for our Library. They were happy to turn a blind eye to a flawed consultation and allow our cherished village services to be shut. It was only the sheer force of the backlash from local residents that forced them to u-turn. As usual, Labour Councillors change their mind as soon as they

realise they are on the wrong side of the argument."

"Again, we have Labour Parish Councillors trotting out the same old political soundbites from their central office that we hear consistently. It doesn't wash with residents and shows they seem to have no plan for our villages or opinions of their own. In May '21 at the all-out WBC elections, Culcheth Glazebury & Croft residents overwhelmingly rejected the Labour Borough councillor candidates by a big margin.

"Along with my fellow Borough Councillors we're looking forward to putting Culcheth Library back on our list of locations for holding our councillor surgeries, ensuring we're accessible to all residents in the ward.

"Finally, I'd personally like to thank all the community activists and Friends of Culcheth Library for the grit and determination they've shown since 2016 and delivering such a great community asset we can all be proud of".



Plans for building in grounds of a historic cottage are turned down

PLANS for a multi-use building in the grounds of a historic cottage at Croft, have been turned down by borough planning chiefs.

They say the development would amount to the construction of new building in the Green Belt – even though there was a previous building on the site.

It is believed the building, in the grounds of Oven Back Cottage, in Winwick Lane, Croft was demolished some time between 2009 and 2015. The cottage itself is thought to date from the early to mid 1800s and is a locally Listed building

Planning law states that a building in the Green Belt may be acceptable if it replaces an existing building, provided it is in the same use and is not materially larger than the one it replaces.

But in this case, there is now no building to replace.

A borough council planning officer's report states: "It is clear that the scale of the proposed building is such that it would amount to considerably more than a 33 per cent increase in the size of the original building and therefore would constitute a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building."

The proposal was for an outbuilding on the site to provide a garage, workshop, garden room, shower room and store on the ground floor and a gym, office and games room on an upper floor within the roof space.



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Winwick Carnival seeks volunteers for

OVER 1,000 visitors flocked to the recent Winwick Carnival with organisers now seeking volunteers to help with next year's event.

The sun shone (for the most part) on Winwick Carnival on Saturday 15th July with over a thousand visitors turning out to show their support on the Parish playing fields in the village.

The popular annual event, which has now been running for over 24 years, was packed with all kinds of stalls selling everything from Jam to Jalapeños, sun hats to hamburgers and bucket loads of fresh tea and scones.

Fairground attractions including a mini rollercoaster, fun house, facepainting, trampolines and much more keeping both the young and old entertained and Winwick Leisure Centre helped provide a slightly sturdier source of liquid refreshment as well as occasional shelter from the rain.

The carnival showground saw twenty two different acts and crowds were wowed by an amazing display by Ridgeside Falconry and a show of ultimate human strength by The Mighty Smith strongman act.

St Helen's Classic Car Association and Cheshire Classics brought along an amazing collection of pristine vehicles from the past and carnival goers jumped at the chance to have their photo taken in front of a rare 1948

Triumph and Thunderbird Coupe.

Winwick Carnival Committee were overjoyed with the turn out and grateful to everyone who came along to support the event and make it a success on the day.

One local resident said 'Everyone in Winwick really looks forward to the village carnival, it's a really special day for all that brings our community together and it is always put together so brilliantly by the fantastic committee who I would like to thank personally for all their hard work. So many volunteers and groups including 70 Croft & Culcheth Air Cadets give up much of their own time the day before, on the day and the day after the event to ensure the whole thing goes smoothly and it does every year. Now it's over I can't wait until 2024.'

Winwick Carnival will return next year just as good if not better than this.

For anyone interested in volunteering for the event, hosting a stall, selling some cake or putting on a show please get in touch with the carnival committee either through the website www.winwickcarnival.co.uk or via email info@winwickcarnival.co.uk

Pictures: John Hopkins



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New bid to transform former restaurant into high-end venue



How the new restaurant would look © Draw Plan

NEW plans have been submitted to transform the former China Rose Chinese restaurant in Culcheth into a high-end hospitality venue after a previous application was rejected by planners.

The applicants are also seeking support from members of the public in a bid to bring the building back into use and help encourage economic growth in the village.

The new proposals involve the demolition of a porch, single storey first-floor rear extension on columns and facade and window modifications including a glazed balcony to the front elevation at the former China Rose premises on Common Lane, Culcheth.

Applicants Red 23 are proposing a high-end hospitality venue containing a restaurant, bar and elevated function room and consist alterations aimed at modernising and enhancing the existing premises.

The proposed alterations will allow increased seating and bar area facilities for a modular stage platform area.

The former China Rose premises was purchased with an adjacent neighbouring property last autumn with the aim of encouraging economic growth in the village.

After the former Chinese ceased trading the building now requires a high level of refurbishment to bring it back into use.

The proposed development would create a high-end bar and restaurant with bistro-style dining on the ground floor and a bar on the first floor.

The project has been redesigned

since the previously refused application. The front extension has been removed and now provides the restaurant with a balcony area and external seating.

The alterations have been designed to be empathetic to the street scene. Inspiration has been taken from Cibo in Hale, designed by Ian Garraway architects.

The applicants have taken to social media to seek support from local residents.

In a post on Facebook they stated: "Our second application has been received by Warrington council but now we need your help and support

"If you can take a few minutes out of your day to log on to our application and make any comments on the proposal it will really help!

"Unfortunately Warrington Council will not take social media comments of support into consideration so please use the reference details below to find our application on the planning portal Ref: 2023/00962/FUL

The previous application was refused after planners said the development would be "over-dominant, over-bearing and create an intrusive feature" in the village.

A decision will be made by Warrington Borough Council planners under delegated powers.

Bungalow approved – despite parish objection

PLANNING chiefs at Warrington have given the go-ahead for a new, four-bedroom bungalow at Croft – despite objections from the parish council.

The scheme in Smithy Brow was approved by members of the borough council's development management committee.

In addition to the bungalow, a car port for three vehicles is included in the project.

The committee was told the development would be behind existing properties in Smithy Brow, accessed by an existing track between two properties. The site was not in the Green Belt but was bordered by the Green Belt.

At present it was used for grazing horses.

The parish council argued that the scheme would impact on the Green Belt, including the movement of its boundary through garden extensions. In addition the location of the dwelling behind the established building line on Smithy Brow would result in the creation of a second row of houses.

They said previous owners of the site had encroached into the countryside, causing the Green Belt boundary to be altered over time.

Planning officers said there was no consistent building line in Smithy Brow and the site was in a residential area close to the village centre.

Overall the development would have no unacceptable impact on visual amenity and would harmonise with the character of the local area.

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Another successful Birchwood 10k

HUNDREDS of runners from around the country took to the streets of Birchwood for the annual Birchwood 10k event organised by Spectrum Striders.

The first male across the finish line was Daniel Cliffe from Hercules Wimbledon AC in a time of 31:50.

Second was Daniel Turner from Wolverhampton & Bilston in a time of 32:44

While in third was Jordan Thomas from City of Stoke AC in a time of 32:53.

First Warrington Club runner to cross the line in 23rd position was Matthew Jenson Warrington Running Club in a time of 36:04

First female across the line in 14th was Anna Bracegirdle from Salford Harriers & AC in a time of 35:10.

Second female in 21 was Lauren

Cooper from Shrewsbury AC in 35:53 followed in 22nd and third female Claire Frankland from West End Runners in 35:55.

First Warrington female to cross the line in 97th position was well-known marathon runner Louise Blizzard from Warrington A C in a time of 42:41.

The event was once again organised by Spectrum Striders who were raising funds for the Mersey Forest's 10 Million Trees project.

Club members don't compete in the Birchwood 10k but help organise it.

Pictures: John Hopkins



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WI members taken on 11,000 km journey

SUNDIAL WI Culcheth, held their August meeting at Newchurch Parish Hall and were soon on a long journey from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and back again, thanks to the photography of speaker, Brian White.

In the 1960s Brian read a book on exploration and became a keen traveller and photographer. In 2008 he and his friend Ian planned a trip to Victoria Falls, heading north from Cape Town to Namibia, the Kalahari Desert, Botswana, and Zambia. Their new Land Rover had a big water tank, extra fuel tanks, a fridge and even gadgets for getting out of sand drifts.

After filming around Cape Town Brian and Ian headed north. They were soon deep in the Kalahari, meeting gemsbok, haartebeest and springbok, all caught in action on their films. These were followed by cheetahs, lions, leopards and elephants. African birds, snakes and beetles also joined their film collection. The desert scenery included huge salt pans and high red sand dunes and in Namibia they met tribeswomen who were painted in red ochre. They stayed in official campsites, they met hippos and crocodiles and at last they reached Victoria Falls.

They clocked up almost 11,000 kilometres!

Joyce Daniels thanked Brian and he was asked a lot of questions about life on the road. He chose Betty Memmott and Irene Bromilow as winner and runner-up in the August competition for an amusing advert.

The business meeting followed after tea served by Freda and Ann. President Eileen Griffiths thanked Jane Bushby for the table bouquet. As there were 4 "Birthday Girls"

Shirley Bennett was drawn by lot to win the flowers. Eileen announced some social events in Chester and an appeal to join in a display of orange flowers and a candlelit vigil for victims of domestic violence. The Lunch Club will meet at Marty's on 29th August. Doreen Procter collected menu choices for the Gibbons Bridge outing and discussed other trip details. Eileen announced an October Coffee Morning and the Carol Service at Winwick in December.

Virtual tour of Chester for WI members

THE historical sites of the city of Chester were the subject of the August meeting of Croft WI.

Aided by photographs, tour guide Steve Shakeshaft gave members a virtual tour of the city and explained the histories of each site, interspersed with anecdotes and stories of his experiences guiding tourists.

In order to be a true Cestrian you have to be born within the city walls and Steve said he qualified for this title and going by his knowledge of the city, there is no doubt of his eligibility. Numerous sites and areas were included in the talk, Roman, Georgian and Victorian, all with an extremely interesting and intriguing past.

Chester was an important Roman settlement and the fortress of Deva Victrix had a garrison of around 5000 soldiers. The famous Eastgate Clock is a permanently open gate in the city walls on the site of the original entrance to the Roman fort. The present clock and gate were built in 1899 to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. The many sites connected to Roman times, the city walls,

Amphitheatre etc were included in the talk, in fact the remains of Roman structures can be seen in the cellars of many present day shops. If requested, the Bridge Cafe will allow patrons to view the remains in their cellars.

There are many Georgian properties in the city, due to the destruction of buildings during the Civil War. One Georgian house has one of the few in and out sedan porches in Britain, where Sedan

chair passengers could alight at their front door and the carriers could depart without having to turn round.

The facade of another looks like it has a number of windows, but three have been bricked up and painted in, due to the highly unpopular window tax of the late 17th century and the saying "daylight robbery" stems from this. The impressive Town Hall is actually the third in Chester's history. The first was a wooden lean-to and the second burnt down in 1862. Unfortunately the present building stands empty, but there are still very impressive council chambers and a court room to be viewed and some of the rooms are hired out for weddings etc. The clock on the tower has hands on only 3 sides, the back is just a face, there is a rumour that it's because it faces Wales!

The wonderful cathedral was originally a Benedictine Abbey and Abbeygate situated near the side of the cathedral was used by the Benedictine monks 700 years ago and if you walk through the smaller of the two passages and look up, the original medieval carvings can be seen in exceptional condition, as they are not exposed to the elements.

Many more historical sites and unknown facts were included in the talk and President Gill Coon gave a vote of thanks for a very interesting and informative evening.

The competition was won by Gill Coon, 2nd Jill Hillam, 3rd Lesley Lloyd

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