

# Culcheth *Life*

Magazine

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**Editor**

Gary Skentelbery

**Production**

James Bryan

**Advertising**James Balme  
01925 631592 opt 1**Editorial**

01925 631592 opt 2

**Email**

info@culchethlife.com

**Websites**www.culchethlife.com  
www.frodshamlife.co.uk  
www.lymmmlife.co.uk  
www.warrington-  
worldwide.co.uk  
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# Editor's Comment

**THE murder of Birchwood teenager Brianna Ghey in Culcheth Linear Park last February rocked the whole community, leaving many wondering – how could this happen here?**

In more than 40 years of reporting, the murder of Brianna is probably the most horrific case I have reported on and my heart goes out to the family and friends who had to listen to the details of the killing during the trial.

How two children, aged 15 at the time of the killing, could plan and carry out such a horrific crime is beyond belief. To stab someone 28 times and to plot a murder in fine detail and lure someone to a park to kill them is beyond wicked.

From the evidence in court and the murder verdicts from the jury, it is clear the girl and boy were both involved in the murder. Although they blamed each other, neither did anything to prevent the other from the act of killing and both fled the scene.

Sadly, Brianna is not the only victim of this horrible crime. Seeing

her parents give speeches outside court after the guilty verdicts was heartbreaking. The lasting emotional damage on them and their extended families will last a lifetime – and then there are the families and friends of the two convicted killers.

It truly is a tragic set of circumstances and will leave many parents wondering what their children are accessing on the internet and dark web – which clearly influenced this barbaric killing.

While I believe in freedom and indeed millions sacrificed their lives to ensure we can enjoy our freedoms, more needs to be done

to protect children and young people and indeed people of all ages, from what they can view on the internet.

I find it mind-boggling that there are people out there who upload videos of real tortures and killings, which if you can acquire the relevant skills and software you can view in the comfort of your own home.

Something needs to be done to punish not just those who carry out these gruesome crimes but also those who allow this kind of sordid material to appear online to be accessed via the internet.

**Deadline for the  
February issue of  
Culcheth Life  
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# It's panto time again – oh yes it is!

**IT'S panto time again for Culcheth Players. Their ever-popular pantomimes are always a sell out and this year they will be staging "Aladdin", and as usual they will be joined by dancers from the Rosemary Powell School of dance.**

The 11 strong chorus of young girls have been working hard each Saturday morning for the past few months perfecting their routines. In recent years Culcheth Players has also partnered up with a local community group, ABC Autism Rocks.

Several members of this group will be performing in the pantomime.

Those who came to see "Cinderella" last year will recall how ABC Autism Rocks had the audience up dancing and clapping

along to their routine. Finally, just to add to the fun, there will be a guest appearance from The Culcheth Fairy. He always gets a rapturous welcome on stage and never minds the cast making light hearted jokes at his expense.

The panto will again be staged over two weekends - Saturday January 13 and Saturday January 20 at 1pm and 6.30pm and Sunday January 14 and Sunday January 21 at 1pm.

If you are not able to see it the first week, you'll hopefully catch

it the second. Despite rising costs Culcheth Players are holding their ticket price.

Admission is £7.50 for online

bookings (subject to booking fees) or £8 on the door of a performance. It's best to book in advance though to avoid disappointment.



*Last year's Cinderella cast.*



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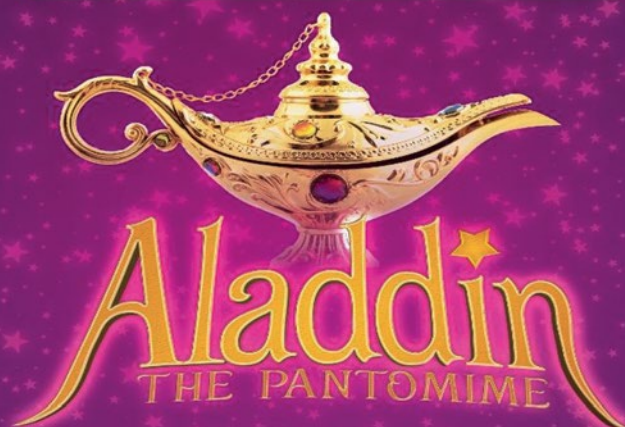
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## Culcheth Players



**Saturday 13th January at 1pm & 6.30pm**

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**Sunday 21st January at 1pm**

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# Storm over plans for 354 dwellings on Green Belt land

**THREE separate planning applications for a total of 354 dwellings on Green Belt land have all been approved.**

All faced objections from local councillors and residents.

The three schemes are for:

- 110 houses on land off Manchester Road, Hollins Green, Rixton. It is strongly opposed by Rixton and Glazebury Parish Council and 29 residents.
- 90 houses at Heathcroft Stud, Deacons Close, Croft. There are objections from Croft Parish Council and 84 residents who are opposed to the Green Belt development.
- 154 houses at Golborne Road, Winwick. It is opposed by Winwick Parish Council and about 149 residents.

Objections were on Green Belt grounds, increased traffic on inadequate roads, loss of wildlife habitats, overshadowing, loss of privacy, lack of local amenities and, in the case of the Winwick scheme, impact on the site of the historic Battle of Winwick, which took place in 1648 and was a key conflict in the English Civil War.

A number of borough councillors also opposed the proposals.

The Hollins Green scheme was an outline application only.

Warrington Borough Council Planning officers are recommended approval in all three cases.



## Changes proposed at Birchwood Fire Station

CHANGES in the way Birchwood Fire Station operates are proposed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The aim is to improve the spread of day-time fire cover and prevention and protection activity at Birchwood.

At present, Birchwood is a nucleus fire station – meaning it is crewed by full-time firefighters between 7am and 7pm every day and at night by on-call firefighters who live within five minutes of the fire station and respond by pager when on call.

The proposal is to crew Birchwood with full-time firefighters between 7am and 7pm four days in eight and by on-call firefighters on the other four days. There would be no change to the on-call cover overnight between 7pm and 7am.

Response times at Birchwood would remain within 10 minutes on average.

There would be no change in the number of full-time fire engines in Warrington during the day.

Average response times in Birchwood may be up to one minute slower but would still be within 10 minutes.

There would be no change to community work and prevention and protection activities in Warrington, but activity would be spread more evenly across Birchwood and Stockton Heath.

Six full-time firefighters would be moved from Birchwood to Stockton Heath. Before any of the changes are approved, there will be a consultation with the public either online via [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CheshireFire2024-2028Plan](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CheshireFire2024-2028Plan) or via email at [consultation@cheshiresire.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@cheshiresire.gov.uk)





# Community pub The Raven welcomes the New Year

**COMMUNITY pub The Raven, at Glazebury, has issued an enthusiastic welcome to the New Year.**

The first few months of the year can be a bit bleak, says spokesperson Peter Sturman. But the Raven is ready to welcome everyone and help spread a bit of joy.

The Raven has come a long way in the last year.

As the community pub embarks upon its first calendar year, the transformation has been a credit to the community.

Peter said; "When you consider, at the start of 2023 we just had the bare bones of our Raven. The building was secure and we had the brickwork of the bar and fireplace. Even the windows were still in the early stages of construction.

"The sheer hard work and dedication of so many people transformed the Raven from a shell into a fantastic, vibrant community pub.

Yet transforming the building back into a pub was just one of a number

of tasks before our community. The funds had to be secured to make this all possible.

"The business side of things had to be set up.

"Staff had to be recruited, equipment and stock purchased. All the various trades engaged and managed so they dovetailed with each other.

"All of that was done by August of last year.

"To visit the Raven now, with all the energy, sights and sounds of a vibrant pub is a fantastic experience.

"As we enter the New Year the Raven has a chance to really come into its own. It was a bit of a whirlwind leading up to Christmas.

"There can be no better place to enjoy the warmth, hospitality and friendship that you find all around you in the Raven.

"Definitely a time to have a glass half full."



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# Boy and girl with 'thirst for killing' of murdering teenager Brianna

**A BOY and a girl have been found guilty of the 'frenzied' murder of teenager Brianna Ghey in a Culcheth park had a 'thirst for killing.'**

Brianna, 16, was stabbed with a hunting knife 28 times in her head, neck, chest and back after being lured to Linear Park, Culcheth, Warrington, on the afternoon of February 11.

The pair, identified only as girl X and boy Y, both now aged 16 but 15 at the time, had denied murder and each blamed the other for the killing of the transgender teenager, described as "horrific" by detectives.

Intelligent, "high functioning" and coming from normal backgrounds, the trial heard the pair had a fascination for violence, torture and murder and had planned the killing for weeks, detailed in a handwritten murder plan and phone messages found by detectives.

A jury of seven men and five women convicted the two following a four-week trial at Manchester Crown Court.

Boy Y has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and is non-verbal and girl X has traits of autism and ADHD.

Trial Judge Mrs Justice Yip is now to discuss with counsel when the defendants, both facing mandatory jail terms for life, will be sentenced.

Outside court, Detective Chief Superintendent Mike Evans, head of crime at Cheshire Police, said: "I'm not sure fun is the word, but I think they killed her because they wanted to prove that they could, or that sort of thirst for killing."

"I don't think there was any motive behind it so possibly, fun? Enjoyment is the right word."

Both killers had a fascination for violence, murder and torture the trial heard, with girl X enjoying watching "snuff" and killing videos on the dark web.

Girl X also compiled notes on serial killers, including Richard Ramirez, known as the Night Stalker, and the notorious cannibal, Jeffrey Dahmer.

The pair drew up a "kill list" of four other children before settling on Brianna as the target, girl X sharing with Y a handwritten plan of how to carry out the murder.

After arresting the pair, police found the handwritten note in girl X's

bedroom and hundreds of messages between the pair, including the plans to kill Brianna and others.

Mr Evans said: "If you can imagine if you download an iPhone, you get about 11,000 pages. So, trying to go through that it wasn't a case of all sudden, 'Bang. Here's these five text messages.'"

"It was a slow (process), almost a slow reveal. I do accept now, looking at it, you sort of go, 'Wow'."

"There's not many murders where you get from planning to execution almost documented, word for word."

Mr Evans also branded the killers "arrogant" believing they would not be caught as girl X claimed the local police were "shite".

"There's more than an element of, 'you won't get caught' you see in the text messages," he said.

"I think that they are both really intelligent kids and you look at the backgrounds, they're quite high functioning."

"I think that's brought a level of arrogance, or certainly confidence."

"I don't ever think they imagined we'd recover those text messages."

"And I'm not sure they ever thought that we'd knock on their doors."

"Again, I think the whole thing is callous and cold. And that's probably where I go with that level of arrogance in that they had a plan. They thought through the plan."

"And it was only at the point where they are confronted with evidence that they didn't know we'd ever have, their world's fallen apart."

Girl X said that, aged 14, she downloaded an app allowing her access to the Dark Web and "Red Rooms" where she enjoyed watching the torture and murder of real people.

Mr Evans added: "That's certainly quite worrying. It shows a level of intelligence. So, not everyone can do that."

"And you know, it's made me probably reflect a little bit as a parent around, actually, how'd you know what your kids are doing when they are sat with the door shut in their bedroom."

"We know in this case, how it's ended, what I would say is, let's put this into a little bit of context, as

horrendous as this is, it is really rare.

"These are two very warped individuals who have done what they've done."

"I can only reflect on myself as a parent thinking how internet aware am I? And do I know what my kids are looking at?"

Following the convictions Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor Ursula Doyle of CPS Mersey Cheshire said: "This has been one of the most distressing cases the Crown Prosecution Service has had to deal with."

"The planning, the violence and the age of the killers is beyond belief."

"Brianna Ghey was subjected to a frenzied and ferocious attack and was stabbed 28 times in broad daylight in a public park."

"Girl X and Boy Y appear to have been a deadly influence on each other and turned what may have started out as dark fantasies about murder into a reality."

"The pages and pages of what's app messages between the two, planning and plotting to kill people, talking of murder, torture and cruelty were very difficult to read."

"The messages provided a terrifying insight into the minds of the two defendants. However, they also provided us with the detailed

planning of the attack and then the attempts to cover it up."

"The Crown Prosecution Service authorised a charge of murder for both of the defendants. They were both equally responsible in planning the killing and carrying it out. In the trial, the defendants tried to blame each other to absolve themselves. The Jury has clearly seen their explanations for the lies that they were."

"This has been a difficult prosecution not least because two very young people were on trial for the most serious offence known to criminal law. It has involved using a number of measures to ensure that the defendants could participate fully in the trial and enable them to give their evidence."

"The Crown Prosecution Service would like to thank the family of Brianna Ghey for the courage and dignity that they have shown throughout these proceedings. We hope today's verdict brings some solace, and our thoughts and sympathies remain with them at this difficult time."

Trial judge Mrs Justice Yip said her killers could be named when the sentencing hearing takes place on February 2.



## Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North

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*Simon Bax,*  
Plant Area Specialist

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# New speed limits come into force on Birchwood Park Avenue

## NEW speed limits have come into force on Birchwood Park Avenue from December 18.

It follows a period of consultation by Warrington Borough Council. It follows concerns over entry speeds on roundabouts.

The borough council has made an Order under Sections 1, 2, 4, 84 and Part IV of Schedule 9 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and of all other enabling powers on 6th December 2023. The effect of the Order is as follows:

The Order specified in Column 1 of Schedule 1 to this Notice is revoked in part to the extent as detailed in Column 2 of the said Schedule.

To introduce a 40 miles per hour speed limit on the lengths of road specified in Column 1 of Schedule

2 to this Notice to the extent as detailed in Column 2 of the said Schedule.

To introduce a 30 miles per hour speed limit on the length of road specified in Column 1 of Schedule 3 to this Notice to the extent as detailed in Column 2 of the said Schedule.

The Order will be effective from 18th December 2023.

Deposited documents may be viewed online at [www.warrington.gov.uk/permanent-traffic-regulation-orders](http://www.warrington.gov.uk/permanent-traffic-regulation-orders) or Contact Warrington, 1 Time Square, Warrington, WA1 2NT between 9am & 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Any person who wishes to

question the validity of the Order or of any provision contained in it on the grounds that it is not within the powers conferred by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 or on the grounds that any requirement

of that Act or any instrument made under it has not been complied with in relation to the Order may, within six weeks from 6th December 2023, apply to the High Court for this purpose.



## Village hall seeks new chairperson

CROFT Village Memorial Hall committee – which is celebrating its 103rd year – is seeking a new chairperson.

Current chairman Peter McCartney is standing down after several years in the voluntary role and is seeking a replacement.

The role involves leading a monthly meeting, being a conscience for safety and helping to promote the facility, along with generally “mucking in” as per most volunteer groups.

Peter said: “Enthusiasm, engagement, interest in the community – these are the keys to success in the role.

“If you could be the person to take the hall into its 104th year and would like to discuss, please contact me on 07703363201.”

Alternatively, you could email [petegillmcc@hotmail.com](mailto:petegillmcc@hotmail.com)

Croft Village Memorial Hall has been a centre for community life in the village since 1920, initially in a

wooden structure before the current brick-built hall replaced it in 1965.

People from a wide area attend events there and it hosts a vibrant and often eclectic mixture of events and classes – something, in fact, for everyone.



Peter McCartney



A busy event at Croft Village Memorial Hall.



## Christmas Lights switched on

VILLAGERS packed the centre of Culcheth for the ceremonial switch-on of the Christmas Lights.

Cllr Keith Bland, chairman of Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council switched on the lights and there was seasonal singing by pupils from Culcheth Community Junior School.

Afterwards, refreshments were served at Newchurch Parish Hall.





# Past and present members celebrate 50 years

**MEMBERS of Culheth and Glazebury Parish Council, past and present, met up to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the parish council.**

Long-standing local Cllr and current Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr., Keith Bland said: "I was delighted to Chair the 50th year of the Culheth & Glazebury Parish Council.

"It was nice to see past members who had either been Chairman or members over that period 'who

we could reminisce with some interesting tales. Interesting that when you look back in history to 1716 a group was formed called The Culheth Township Committee which lasted over 100 years. This was replaced in 1895 by Culheth Parish Council, which was then changed to Culheth & Glazebury

Parish Council in 1973. Let's hope it lasts another 50 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those councillors and parish clerks for all their dedication in serving the community of our villages in the past and hopefully in the future."

Former parish and Borough Councillor Chris Vobe added: "Culheth and Glazebury Parish Council has been serving our villages now for 50 years. This was

an opportune juncture for members past and present to reflect on the Council's numerous achievements – from funding important community initiatives to supporting hundreds of residents with individual queries and concerns. We also took time to pay tribute to, and remember, our sadly missed colleagues including Peter Caswell, Irene Brewin, Geoff Hill, John Andrew and Alan Leech."





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# Christmas came early for former Croft cadet as part of GB Bobsleigh team

**CHRISTMAS came early for former Culheth High School and ex Croft Cadet Alex Cartagena as part of the GB Bobsleigh team.**

Recent performances in the final European cup races of 2023 in Sigulda, Latvia, has shown the team now has world cup potential in 2024!

Alex, aged 26, who joined the RAF at 17 as a Mechanical Engineer, took up the sport just over three years ago after competing for the RAF in weight and powerlifting when he was identified as showing good potential after speed trials initially for the RAF at Cosford and then for the GB Team.

The team came away with another two Top 6 Wider podium finishes in the European cup races, with 4 Top 6 results in 5 Races.

Corporal John Stanbridge, pilot for Team GB Bobsleigh, who has bounced back from suffering a broken neck injury 12 months ago, said: "We have proven once again that we have World Cup potential!"

"Great work from Jens Hullah in

Race 4 and a massive effort from Alex Cartagena RAF in Race 5 to secure a top 5 start and Top 5 run- matching the Swiss team to 1 hundredth of a second!

"We now stand 5th overall in the International Bobsleigh & Skeleton Federation (IBSF) 2-man European cup rankings with 3 races to go! These results will open opportunities for the team to make World Cup appearances and potentially the World Championships in 2024.

He added: "We do still need support and funding to keep the team fighting for podiums and progressing to the World stage."

"If you want to back a team that have endured, adapted and defied the odds to secure result then please get in touch."

"I'm truly proud of what we have achieved so far this year. You can really see what it means to us!"

Pictures: Girts Kehris / International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation





# New president and secretary installed

**THE monthly meeting of Glazebrook WI saw the installation of the new president: Maureen Banner and new secretary Linda Scofield.**

The community centre was decorated, and a warm welcome given to all. Jerusalem was sung.

The business meeting was held prior to entertainment, and Christmas afternoon tea.

Resolutions for next year's AGM at the 'Royal Albert Hall', were discussed.

The entertainment was the 'Dukes

of Longbarn' who were festively dressed, and played more seasonal music and songs. Many members joined in too.

Afterwards a variety of delicious cakes was served which the 'Dukes' also enjoyed!

The enjoyable afternoon ended with singing the National Anthem.

## WI members celebrate with music and food

MEMBERS of Sundial WI met in Newchurch Parish Hall for a pre-Christmas celebration with music and food.

The seats were grouped informally to give a clear view of the Rockets, a popular local group with ukuleles, guitars, at least one jew's harp and a very impressive drum kit.

President Eileen Griffiths welcomed three visitors and the first part of the Rockets' programme began. There were Christmas songs, Ewan McColl's homage to Salford ('Dirty Old Town'), and 'The Sloop John B' and other songs

from across the Atlantic.

The refreshments were individual Box Teas, put together by Doreen Procter and Committee members, and much enjoyed by all, including the Rockets. They went on with the rest of their programme – Deck the Halls, Rudolph (of course), Frosty the Snowman, and a whole medley of seasonal and non-seasonal songs.

The business part of the meeting was mainly a reminder of the Celebration Dinner at the Village Club on January 26 and thanks to Joyce Daniels for the table flowers which were given to Helen Slattery.



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# Retrain & Upskill this Winter



Warrington  
& Vale Royal  
College

**ADULT COLLEGE**



## Enrol now for adult courses starting January 2024

**You don't have to wait until September 2024 to change your life! Take the first step towards your dream future and enrol on an adult course starting this January.**

We offer a huge variety of adult courses to help you retrain and upskill, ranging from short adult community learning courses to accredited professional and higher technical qualifications.

You can browse our full range of adult courses online or in our Winter Course Guide, simply head to **wvr.ac.uk/adult** and request your copy.



## Meet our adult students achieving more in 2024



**Kirsty Woolston**  
Pre Access to Higher Education

"You're never too old. I'm following my dreams of becoming a paramedic thanks to the Pre Access course."



**Samantha Orford**  
Level 4 Therapeutic Counselling

"My dream is to run my own counselling practice, which now feels possible thanks to the teaching and support I received."



**Sarah Appleton**  
CIPD Level 5 People Management

"My tutors have been amazing. They are so knowledgeable and supportive of my professional development."



**Don Newton-le-Willows**  
Level 1 Carpentry & Joinery

"I highly recommend the college to others who are looking to improve their construction skills."



## Many of our courses are **FREE\*** or Study Now, Pay Later!

Your course may be **FREE\*** if you are in receipt of an income-based benefit or in employment and earning less than £20,319 (£31,600.40 if you reside in Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) per year.

There are also several funding options in place which, if eligible, will enable you to study now and pay later, pay in instalments or not have to pay at all! What's more, you may be able to access a wide range of finance and funding support to help you during your time at college from the further education bursary fund.

To find out more about student finance and financial support, please call **01925 494 501** or call in to our Warrington campus.



## **FREE\*** Distance Learning

If you don't have time to commit to a full-time college course but want to enhance your skills and gain a new qualification, we offer a wide range of **FREE\*** distance learning courses.

Visit **wvr.ac.uk/distance-learning** to browse our full range of distance learning courses.

## Adult Enrolment Evening

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January, 5.00pm - 8.00pm**

Join us to find out more about our range of courses and have all your questions about returning to education as an adult student answered. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the flexibility of our courses, the various funding options available and even enrol on your chosen course.

Learn more and register at: **wvr.ac.uk/enrolmentevening**.

**WVR.AC.UK/ADULT**

**01925 494 494**

\*Terms & conditions apply.