

Culcheth Life

Magazine

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Ladies Day comes to Culcheth

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Editor's Comment

THERE wasn't as dry eye in the house when family and friends gathered at the Raven Inn to celebrate the life of Cindy Sturman.

While I only had the honour of meeting this remarkable woman once briefly, I worked closely with her husband Peter throughout the campaign to save the Raven Inn and then transform it into a community pub at the heart of the community.

Cindy supported Peter and the team with their endeavours, but



little did I know about her life which unfolded during the special event in her memory.

Bravely battling with Parkinson's Disease for nearly three decades, Cindy overcame adversity and lived life to the full after the heartbreak of giving up her baby daughter for adoption as a teenager, later going through a divorce before meeting her true love Peter and eventually being re-united with her daughter.

As I reflected on her remarkable story, which brought me and others at the event to tears, it made me realise what a remarkable woman Cindy was and what a great role model for living life to the full in the face of adversity.

It was also lovely to see many familiar faces in the community

coming together to show their respects and support for Peter and their family as Cindy's story was expertly articulated by well-known local councillor, Paul Campbell.

I have no doubt Cindy will be sadly missed by her family and friends – but her memory and legacy will live on – none more so than in the Raven Inn, which along with husband Peter and many others in the community, she helped save for future generations to enjoy.

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Call for action to tackle anti-social hot spot

INDEPENDENT Cllr. Neil Johnson has launched a campaign to tackle what he calls an "anti-social behaviour hot spot" on Shaw Street, Culcheth.

Cllr. Johnson says that the Shaw Street Recreation Ground and nearby playing fields have become a magnet for incidents of anti-social behaviour, including graffiti, vandalism, drug dealing and use of alcohol.

Now, Cllr. Johnson is speaking out on behalf of residents in the Shaw Street and Warrington Road area who have been forced to put up with this behaviour for too long.

He said: "Enough is enough.

These disgraceful acts of anti-social behaviour have gone on for too long. We know that a small group of anti-social youths congregate in this area on Friday and Saturday nights, drinking, graffitiing the facilities, and even engaging in vandalism.

"There is no reason why the good people of Shaw Street and Warrington Road should have to put up with this.

"We know that the village litter-

picking team, who I work closely with, have collected dozens of nitrous oxide canisters from around this site. A small, badly-behaved minority are making life difficult for everyone.

"I am disappointed that, when this issue has been raised in the past, certain Councillors have shrugged their shoulders and said that nothing can be done. That is not good enough and it's not the right attitude to take.

"I want to convene the police, the Council and the users of the playing fields to discuss what can be done. There has been talk about closing the gates at night to

stop people getting access. This has been challenged on health and safety grounds, but it must be possible to arrive at a solution. Anti-social behaviour is not acceptable and we should not make excuses against tackling it on 'health and safety grounds'. I will be inviting the police, the Council and other services to a meeting in the near future to hold serious discussions about this problem and the effect it is having on the village. As the independent voice of the people, I want to convene all parties and iron this out.

"I also want to see a stronger police presence in the area."



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Library gardens celebrated at community event

THE rejuvenation of the gardens at Culcheth Village Library has been celebrated at a special community event.

Culcheth High School headteacher Chris Hunt and Matthew and Helen Bent of Bents Garden and Home spoke to guests, while young people from Culcheth High and Newchurch Primary School treated guests to music performances, including songs from Roald Dahl's "Matilda the Musical."

A plaque was unveiled, in appreciation of everyone who contributed to the project's success.

It was in November 2023, that the library building was re-opened following a £400,000 refurbishment. Since then, the Friends of Culcheth Library, with support from the community, have led a number of projects and fundraising events to improve the library's outdoor space.

The collective effort has culminated in a stunning garden makeover, creating a vibrant and welcoming environment for all.

Key contributions to the garden's transformation have come from:

- Culcheth High School who donated outdoor furniture, including durable tables and benches crafted from recycled plastic, providing comfortable seating for library visitors.

- Bents Garden and Home who donated specimen trees, shrubs, plants, and bulbs, which will add

interest, colour and beauty to the library grounds as they become established.

Cllr Tony Higgins, Warrington Borough Council's cabinet member for communities, culture and leisure, said: "The Culcheth Library refurbishment project has revitalized the building, offering a modern and adaptable space for people of all ages."

"I'm delighted that this is now complemented by these fantastic, new-look gardens. It's all down to a wonderful collective effort, with a number of community partners working together to create a thriving and welcoming space for everyone to enjoy."

Janet Evans, Co-Vice Chair of the Friends of Culcheth Library, said: "I'd like to thank our special donors and everyone else who has made donations to this project, in terms of money and time."

"As well as paying tribute to everyone involved in the project, our celebration event gave local residents and library users the opportunity to look at their newly renovated library and outdoor grounds with fresh eyes and consider how fortunate we are to have it at the centre of our community."

"It is the jewel in the crown of Warrington's libraries and we

deserve to be proud of what we have."

"We want to encourage everyone, especially our young people, to take ownership of this

first-class facility. It is YOUR library, OUR library, and we need to look after it and spread the word about what a wonderful community we live in!"



Ladies Day comes to Culcheth

Culcheth Players are in the final few weeks of rehearsals for their next production, Ladies Day by Amanda Whittington.

Work, love and life are just one long, hard, slog for the fish-filleting foursome of Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda until the year Royal Ascot relocates to York. Out go the hairnets and overalls as the four ditch work, do themselves up to the nines and head off to Ladies' Day at the races for a day of glamour, excitement, a flirt and a flutter – and more besides..... The production is directed by Culcheth Players member Ayesha Morris in her first directing role for the group. She brings a wealth of experience with her from her career teaching drama and also acting with Culcheth Players and Wigan Little Theatre. Her vision and expertise

is sure to make this heart warming comedy a hit. You won't want to miss it!

The performances will be at Newchurch Parish Hall (next to Sainsbury's). There is step free, level access throughout the building. The dates are Friday 16th and Saturday 17th May and Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th May. All performances start at 7.30pm and will finish around 9.45pm. Ticket prices are again held at £7.50 when booked online (plus booking fee) or £8 on the door. Complimentary light refreshments are served in the interval. Book online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/culchethp or if you prefer to pay on the door you can reserve a ticket on 07943 517710 as well as just paying on the night.



 **Culcheth Players**

Ladies Day

by Amanda Whittington

An amateur production by arrangement with Nick Hern Books

Friday 16th & Saturday 17th May, 2025 at 7.30pm

Friday 23rd & Saturday 24th May, 2025 at 7.30pm

Newchurch Parish Hall, Common Lane, Culcheth

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Croft children lead the way in Spring Clean litter pick



YOUNGSTERS from Croft Primary School teamed up with the Croft Litter Network to take part in this year's Great British Spring Clean, bringing the community together in a shared effort to care for the environment.

The initiative saw enthusiastic Year 5 pupils don protective vests and grab litter pickers to help clean up the village playing fields. Under the guidance of the Litter Network volunteers, the children not only made a real difference to the local area but also learned about recycling and how to dispose of different types of waste responsibly.

Inspired by their experience, the pupils each designed a poster with messages about saving the planet and protecting the environment. Thanks to generous funding from Croft Parish Council, these vibrant

and thoughtful designs have been transformed into banners, now proudly displayed at the entrance to the park for all to see.

"It's been fantastic to see the children so engaged," said a representative from the Croft Litter Network. "They've really taken the message to heart, and their posters are both creative and inspiring."

The project has not only brightened up the park but also strengthened the bond between the school and the wider community, reminding everyone that even small actions can make a big difference.



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Parish Council partners with Warrington Youth Zone

Culcheth & Glazebury Parish Council have launched a transformative joint venture with Warrington Youth Zone.

The strategic partnership is set to elevate the opportunities available for young people in the local community, fostering their development and empowering them to reach their highest potential.

The collaboration between the pair aims at achieving several key objectives:

Providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people to explore their interests and talents.

Offering educational and vocational training programs that prepare children and young people for their future careers.

Promoting physical and mental well-being through various sports and recreational activities.

Encouraging social engagement and leadership skills among children and young people.

This joint venture will introduce a series of innovative programs and initiatives designed to cater to the diverse needs of children and young people in Culcheth, Croft and Glazebury.

Some of the highlights include:
Skill Development Workshops: Sessions focusing on a wide range of skills including technology, arts, music, and entrepreneurship.

Mental Health Support: Access

to mental health support from trained professionals, professional counselling, and support groups to enhance the emotional mental well-being of children and young people

Sports and Fitness: A variety of sports activities and fitness programs to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Community Projects: Opportunities for children and young people to engage in community service and social impact projects.

Councillor Paul Campbell, Chair of Culcheth & Glazebury Parish Council said: "This partnership is a game-changer for the youth in Culcheth, Croft & Glazebury. We are committed to providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed." Councillors of all political parties voted to proceed with this exciting project.

Councillor Steve Fleming added: "The collaboration with Warrington Youth Zone will bring additional resources, expertise, and support, amplifying the impact of the Parish Council's efforts."

Dave McNicholl, Chief Executive of Warrington Youth Zone said: "We are excited to work together to create a brighter future for our young people. This joint venture is a testament to our shared vision and dedication."



Party in the park for all the family

Join Croft Parish Council for a party in the park for all the family to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

There will be a bouncy castle, ice cream van (Matt's Ices), music, The Rockets Ukulele Band, face

painting, hot drinks (courtesy of The Fursty Fox), fish and chips (available from The Horse Shoe).

From 4pm onwards. Evening will conclude with the lamp-lighting and dedication at 9.30pm.

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CROFT PLAYING FIELDS
4pm onwards

Evening will end with the lamp lighting and dedication at 9:30pm

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Bents receives Feefo Gold Trusted Service award



Family-owned and run business, Bents Garden & Home has won the Feefo Gold Trusted Service Award, an independent seal of excellence, which recognises businesses that consistently deliver a world-class customer experience.

Feefo established the Trusted Service Awards in 2014 to recognise brands that use the platform to collect verified reviews and receive exceptional feedback from their customers. The awards are unique because they truly reflect a business's dedication to providing outstanding customer service by analysing feedback from real customers.

Working with over 6,500 brands, Feefo is the world's largest provider of verified reviews, helping brands understand customers by analysing verified reviews and providing insight into trends, needs and habits.

Consumer confidence is now at its highest level since 2021 as living standards show signs of improvement, but consumers remain cautious with their spending. The businesses that stand out will be those who put excellence in their service and weave in a customer advocacy strategy. This award celebrates brands that are delivering standards that go above and beyond.

Feefo has presented Gold Trusted Service Awards to businesses that have collected at least 50 reviews between January 1st 2024 and December 31st 2024, with a Feefo

service rating of between 4.5 and 5.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home commented: "We're so excited to receive a Trusted Service Award from Feefo. Keeping our customers happy is our top priority so the fact that this award is based on feedback from real customers gives us confidence we are providing an exceptional level of service. The award reflects how hard our colleagues work to listen to our customers and keep them happy. As we move through 2025, we'll continue to listen to our customers and deliver what they want."

Tony Wheble, CEO at Feefo, congratulated the winners: "During these economically challenging times, it's inspiring to see companies like Bents Garden & Home consistently going above and beyond for their customers. The Trusted Service Awards recognise businesses that don't just meet expectations – they exceed them. These awards celebrate companies that gather genuine feedback and use it to deliver exceptional customer experiences. The dedication shown by this year's winners sets a benchmark for customer service excellence."



The Gardening Guide



Plant out warm weather crops such as tomatoes, squashes, cucumbers and peppers.

Simon Bax,
Plant Area Specialist

- Start applying summer lawn foods now - remember to water them in well
- Help the environment by composting as much of your garden waste as possible
- Evergreen hedges can be given their first trim of the season - if the clippings are not too woody, they can be mixed in to the compost heap
- Remove flowers that have finished to ensure a continuity of bloom - this stops the plant wasting energy in producing seeds that are unwanted



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Hat-trick of wins secured for Torus Housing tenants

INDEPENDENT Cllr. Neil Johnson has helped secure a hat-trick of wins to resolve long-standing issues brought to his attention by tenants of Torus Housing in Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft.

Cllr. Johnson says he has tackled dozens of individual pieces of casework over the last few weeks, including three which have resulted in significant long-term benefits for the people concerned.

These include a local resident who had been made homeless and has now found new, permanent accommodation.

Cllr Johnson says he believes

in the kind of community where people look out for each other, regardless of circumstances. Next, he supported a tenant of Torus Housing in securing a new shower. The lady had been waiting for over two years, but after contacting Torus Housing Cllr. Johnson, the job was completed in just a couple of weeks!

Finally, he succeeded in

arranging for a new driveway to be installed for residents in Newchurch. These hard-working people had been left unable to park properly because of their poorly-maintained path. Now they have a brand new one.

Cllr Johnson said: "As people know, housing is a passion of mine. Making sure that everyone in Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft has a safe, secure and comfortable place to live is really

important. I have been pleased to help tenants of Torus Housing with these longstanding problems, which are thankfully now resolved. I will always hold local housing providers to account if they do not maintain things properly."

He added: "Being a local councillor is a job I take seriously, but I think we can get away with one tongue in cheek photo wearing our shower caps to celebrate!"



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"Growing together at the heart of God's community"

End of era as final traders leave CPS Centre but new lease of life for popular cafe

AS the final traders left the CPS Centre at Culcheth the popular Sundial Terrace Café was celebrating a new lease of life which has been welcomed by local Independent Cllr. Neil Johnson.

Borough and Parish Cllr. Johnson, who has been campaigning on behalf of traders since the shock closure news, has expressed his delight that the Sundial Terrace café, previously located in the CPS Centre, will be given a new lease of life at the Daten Sports and Social Club.

The café was forced to vacate the premises following the decision by the CPS Centre landlords to evict their tenants earlier this year.

Cllr. Johnson said: "I am delighted, both for the Sundial Terrace café and the other businesses formerly of the CPS Centre, who have managed to find new premises throughout the village.

"Our community is a thriving hub of local employment. I was determined to do everything possible to help these tenants, not

only with their storage and notice periods, but with securing new rental space for their businesses.

"I am delighted that the Sundial Terrace café, a very popular place to eat and enjoy freshly cooked meals by the brilliant team who work there, has found a new home at the Daten. I encourage all residents to support our local eateries whenever they can, whether that be restaurants, cafes or pubs. As long as we spend locally, the people who work there can be assured of secure jobs with good wages. It makes sense to help our village economy and support one another.

"I will be arranging to hold a councillor's drop-in surgery at the Sundial Terrace café in the future so that residents can come and speak with me, face to face, over a cup of tea."



Long-established book shop finds a new home

CULCHETH'S long-established Forget-me-Not book shop – one of the businesses forced to quit the CPS shopping centre when the owners issued shock notices to quit – has found a new home.

And best-selling local author David Costa was there on the opening day to wish book shop owners Victoria Simpson-Forest and her husband the best of luck in their new location in Lodge Drive.

David – also known as local councillor Paul Campbell – wanted to thank the owners for all their work in helping to promote local authors like him, along with the more famous authors whose books can be found on their shelves.

He said: "It was a no-brainer to

support Victoria and her husband in their new endeavour, having had to move out of their previous store at the CPS shopping centre when the owners there decided to evict all the businesses upstairs.

"It's wonderful that the Forget-Me-Not book shop will continue in the village of Culcheth at its new location on Lodge drive. The new store looks wonderful, retaining its welcoming atmosphere and is an ideal location for books and special toy lovers who wish to visit.

"I wish Victoria and the team all the best for the future, and I look forward to many more years of visiting this brilliant bookselling store."



Council remains committed to securing Gypsy & Traveller site despite claims £25k wasted at Croft

WARRINGTON Borough Council says it remains committed to securing a safe and adequate transit site to support the Gypsy & Traveller community, despite claims £25,000 was wasted on a location at Croft.

Independent Councillor Neil Johnson, who controversially leaked the location of a proposed transit site off Kenyon Lane in the village, has slammed the council after receiving a breakdown of the nearly £25,000 spending they made on their plans to site a gypsy/traveller transit site in Croft.

Cllr. Johnson resigned from the Labour Group last year in protest at their plans and revealed the planned location of the site on Kenyon Lane. At the time, it was revealed that £25,000 of public funds had been spent on the project, which had to be abandoned, but without any further detail available on exactly what the money had been spent on.

Cllr. Johnson has pursued the Council for this information for nearly six months and has now received a breakdown of the associated costs.

He said: "It has taken nearly six months for the Council to come clean, but finally this information has been dragged kicking and screaming into the public domain."

"The bottom line is this: they

wasted nearly £25,000 in rate payers money, pursuing a gypsy/traveller site which was never going to happen. The Council did not have access rights to the land or any sort of accommodation with the landowner. Nevertheless, they decided to proceed, and the hapless members of the Cabinet voted to carry on without having carried out due diligence on this disastrous scheme.

"They poured money down the drain. Nearly £4,000 on a valuation report, over £6,000 on legal costs, and a further £4,000 on agents fees. Officer costs were in excess of £7,000, and external partners spent over £1,200. This was all redundant because it was never going to happen. Even without the access issues, it was a totally unsuitable site.

"I am outraged that money paid through taxes by my residents has been squandered in this way. Think what could have been done in Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft with that £25,000 if it hadn't been wasted. Someone's head should roll for this.



"The Council's auditors should act immediately and conduct a forensic investigation into this wasted money. How can officers and Labour councillors have approved so much expenditure on a scheme that was doomed to failure? Why was due diligence not carried out regarding access to the site? Why did no Councillors ask that question? Something has gone seriously wrong if money is allowed to be thrown away like this. I call upon my fellow ward councillors Matt Smith and Janet Seddon, to join me in pressing for a review by the external auditors. The local MP, Charlotte Nichols, should also refer this matter to the Secretary of State for Local Government.

"Frankly, those who wasted public funds should have to pay

the money back from their own pockets. Why should we foot the bill?"

But a Warrington Borough Council spokesperson responded saying: "We produced the comprehensive information requested by Councillor Johnson months ago. The assertion that we delayed communicating this information is wholly inaccurate.

"The cost incurred resulted from the extensive due diligence that was required for this potential site. The council invests a considerable amount of money each year managing unlawful occupation of council-owned land and we remain committed to securing a safe and adequate site to support the Gypsy & Traveller Community."

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Special medal presented to honour 48 years service as a parish councillor

COUNCILLORS from Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council came together recently to honour one of their own on behalf of the full Parish Council and the people of Culcheth and Glazebury with a special medal presentation.

After 48 years as a Parish Councillor, Keith Bland MBE decided it really was time to call it a day and to put his feet up.

During his last term, the Councillors of all the political parties had no doubt when they elected him as Chair of the Parish Council for the year 2023-2024. To honour that year of service to the community and the many other years of service for which Keith had been awarded an MBE by the late Queen Elizabeth II the Parish Council presented Keith with the Parish Council medal on behalf of the Council and the residents of Culcheth & Glazebury.

Presenting the medal, Cllr. Paul Campbell current Chairman of the Parish Council spoke of his memories of first meeting Keith almost 25 years ago. One thing that struck him was how Keith worked so hard to help the people in this community, and if anything his lasting legacy was that all the councillors from whatever political persuasion continued to work together as a team. Paul also

mentioned how Keith was able to keep going in that work was greatly down to the support he has always had from his wife Sue, who for many years was also a Parish Councillor.

To thank those present Keith spoke about the things that first brought him to Culcheth such as when he worked for the Atomic Energy Agency. He was always honoured that the people of the two villages had put their trust in him and that his fellow councillors had supported him in all he had to do. He wished everyone all the best for the future and asked that they continue to work as that team for the benefit of the residents of the two villages.



When Granada TV was a cinema chain

SPEAKER Judy Popley gave a talk on her long career with Granada TV at the monthly meeting of Culcheth's Sundial WI.

Granada began as a cinema chain in around London, founded by Sydney and Cecil Bernstein and then spread out to the North. Their Manchester studios were the largest in the UK and Judy began in their Press Office. She showed photos of well-known actors and the plays they appeared in, and members recognised most of them, from Ena Sharples to Ben Kingsley and Hugh Laurie and Victoria Wood.

Lancashire settings were widely used, as were the streets of Manchester for the big success -Coronation Street! Some series had short runs but Sherlock Holmes and Brideshead Revisited did very well. Granada also moved on to Service Stations and food services, like Harry

Ramsden's.

Helen Slattery thanked Judy and asked her to judge the April competition- "An Advert". She chose Margaret Jones and Brenda Pinion as winner and runner-up.

After tea served by Ann Hambleton, Margaret Fletcher and Freda Wilcock the business meeting dealt with the Mosslands meeting and the trips still being arranged up to next November. Vice- President Doreen Procter greeted three visitors and five "Birthday Girls" and thanked Marjorie Pugh for the table bouquet which was won by Jean Riley. The speaker on May 20 will be Brian Joyce and his topic is "The Profumo Affair". The competition will be "A Spy Novel".

Keeping bees – and how to attract them to your garden

LOCAL apiarist Stephen Nichols gave an interesting talk on "Keeping Bees" at the monthly meeting of Croft WUI.

He has been a beekeeper for 13 years, beginning when his son gave him a hive during a house clearance. He described his role as managing the bees so that they thrive and produce new colonies.

Members were shown an unoccupied hive Stephen brought some jars of his locally produced honey.

A typical hive contains one queen bee and about 60,000 honeybees, only 6000 of which will be male drones. The rest are female worker bees who collect food, feed the developing larvae and build wax honeycombs where eggs are laid and honey is stored. The drones main role is to mate with the queen bee, after which they fall to the ground and die.

The queen is kept in the base layer of the hive where she lays up to 2000 eggs a day.

A queen excluder grid stops the queen from leaving the base layer so that if the bees swarm they will return

to the hive, attracted by her scent. Honey is stored in honeycombs on frames in the upper layers of the hive.

Stephen described how he breaks the wax sealing the honeycombs with a fork before centrifuging and triple filtering to collect the pure honey.

Conserving the bee population is of vital importance because 80 per cent of the food we eat relies on pollinators during its production. Plants that will attract bees to the garden include fruit trees, hawthorn, mahonia, honeysuckle, foxgloves and rhododendrons.

A worrying threat to bees is the Asian hornet, a voracious predator now spreading to Britain, which can destroy a whole hive in a day. Members of the public can report sightings by sending a photo to alernonnative@ceh.ac.uk

President Gill Coon thanked Stephen for his presentation which stimulated lots of interesting questions from the audience.

The competition "A Honey Item" was won by Gill Coon, second Bettina Sharpe and third Lesley Lloyd.

Black Sheep Wools picks up three awards



CULCHETH-based yarn shop Black Sheep Wools has picked up three awards in the CraftWorld Yarn Industry awards.

Director Sara Geraghty said: "We're thrilled to announce that we've won in three categories! We're so grateful to everyone who took the time to vote for us."

The awards were for best shop in the North of England, best workshops and classes and runner-up in the best online shop category.

Black Sheep Wools, in Glazier's Lane, Culcheth, won praise for its knowledgeable staff, extensive product range, and a charming tea shop serving homemade cakes.

The Black Sheep Craft Barn is believed to be the largest dedicated knitting and stitching shop in the UK. However, it is still a very much a village store with a welcoming atmosphere and friendly, knowledge staff.

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