

Culcheth Life

Magazine

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Sahara trek for charity

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Editor's Opinion



The semi-rural charm of Culcheth and Croft is under ongoing unprecedented strain.

Both villages are facing an aggressive wave of housing pressures that threatens to erode their historic green belt identity.

A minimum of 200 homes allocated for Culcheth—highlighted for the already approved 194-unit Story Homes development—coupled with a controversial 200-home proposal at Turret Hall Farm in Croft, has sparked deep community anxiety.

Local infrastructure is at a breaking point. Commuters grapple with rush-hour gridlock, local schools are nearing capacity, and medical practices are stretched thin.

The fundamental worry among residents is clear: our villages are being transformed into congested suburban sprawl without the necessary investment in public services to support the influx. Yet, amid valid frustration over poorly integrated housing, a different kind of development provides a blueprint for how these villages can evolve constructively.

Work has officially commenced at Charnock Road to construct three covered, high-quality padel tennis courts at Culcheth Sports Club.

Driven by specialised operator Ace Padel, the project avoids encroaching on our precious open countryside. Instead, it breathes new life into under-utilised spaces within an existing community footprint.

Crucially, this commercial venture treats local infrastructure as an asset to be enhanced, not just a resource to be drained.

As part of the rollout, Ace Padel has acquired the long-standing Legacy Health and Fitness Club. While maintaining the core gym facilities that members have relied on for years, the developer plans to heavily upgrade the fitness equipment and build a state-of-the-art reformer Pilates studio.

By bundling the exploding, socially cohesive sport of padel tennis with comprehensive wellness facilities, the site is morphing into a premier community fitness hub.

It provides residents with top-tier recreational spaces directly on their doorstep. The sharp contrast between these two types of development offers a vital lesson for Warrington Borough Council as it navigates the ongoing Local Plan update, while looking at closing community facilities.

Housing growth cannot simply be forced onto semi-rural areas without an equal commitment to public lifestyle infrastructure.

The Ace Padel model succeeds because it focuses on enhancement, social health, and localised community utility. Conversely, speculative housing blocks often feel extractive, adding physical volume while reducing the overall quality of

village life. If Culcheth and Croft must absorb more residential growth, the council must mandate that developers match the ambition shown at the sports club.

Future housing designs must integrate meaningful green spaces, active travel links, and wellness amenities from the outset. True sustainable planning requires a delicate balance. We must fiercely protect the distinct green spaces separating our villages, while simultaneously backing smart, health-focused redevelopments that make our community a healthier, more vibrant place to live.

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Bents announce Mindfulness in Schools Project as charity of year

WARRINGTON-based Bents Garden & Home has announced the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) as its 2026 Charity of the Year, supporting its mission to equip young people with essential skills and techniques to improve their wellbeing.

MiSP is one of the UK's most established, providers of mindfulness training for schools and youth settings. Working with children and young people aged 3 to 18, the charity develops and delivers structured, classroom-based curricula, supporting teachers to bring mindfulness into everyday learning.

The partnership holds particular significance for Bents due to the charity's strong local connection with Esther Ghey, founder of the Brianna Ghey Legacy Project, established to raise awareness of mindfulness in schools and offering 'Flourishing Families' wellbeing workshops for families, a 'Look up and Live' workshop and 'Growing Together' programme, designed to support parents, families and children with wellbeing and screen time.

Esther, who works in an ambassadorial role at MiSP, found her personal mindfulness practice was vital in supporting her after the death of her daughter, Birchwood teenager Brianna in 2023. Working alongside the Mindfulness in Schools Project and backed by community support, Esther founded the Peace in Mind campaign, aiming not only to provide mindfulness trained

staff in every school in Warrington but also to inspire broader change across England. Esther's vision is a future where all young people are better equipped to navigate life's challenges with strength and empathy. This local link has been a key factor in Bents' decision to support the charity, reflecting its commitment to backing initiatives that make a meaningful difference within its community.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home said: "We are delighted to be supporting the Mindfulness in Schools Project as our Charity of the Year. The work they do to support young people's mental wellbeing is incredibly important, particularly in today's world.

"What makes this partnership even more meaningful is the strong local connection through Esther Ghey and the impact already being seen in our community. We look forward to working together to raise awareness and vital funds to help extend their reach even further."

Over the coming year, Bents will host a series of fundraising initiatives and awareness campaigns, inviting customers, colleagues and the wider community to get involved and

support the charity's work.

Since its inception, MiSP has made a significant impact. Between 2009 and 2025, more than 11,625 individuals have been trained to deliver its programmes, benefiting at least 1.1 million children and young people. Through this partnership, Bents hopes to help extend the reach of MiSP, enabling more young people to develop resilience, improve their mental wellbeing and build skills that will support them throughout their lives.



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Local woman to take on Sahara Desert trek in support of childhood cancer charity

Local woman Samantha Lafferty, from Culcheth, will take on an extraordinary challenge this November as she treks across the Sahara Desert to raise vital funds and awareness for The Joshua Tree, a charity supporting families affected by childhood cancers.

From 18–23 November, Samantha will step far outside her comfort zone to cross vast sand dunes, endure demanding physical and mental conditions, sleep beneath the stars and experience the culture and landscapes of the Sahara – all in aid of a cause close to her heart.

Every step of the trek will support The Joshua Tree, a charity dedicated to providing emotional, wellbeing and practical support to children with cancer and their families. The organisation supports not only diagnosed children, but also parents, siblings and extended family members for as long as support is needed.

Speaking about the challenge, Samantha, 53, said: "This journey is about so much more than adventure. Childhood cancer impacts entire families, and The Joshua Tree does incredible work to ensure those families never face that journey alone. I wanted to take on a personal challenge that could help make a meaningful difference – raising both funds and awareness

for such an important cause."

The Joshua Tree offers a lifeline to families navigating one of the most difficult periods of their lives, providing vital mental health and wellbeing services from diagnosis through to remission and recovery.

To date, the charity has supported more than 690 families and approximately 2,400 individuals through its centres in Cheshire and North Wales. Demand for its services has risen significantly, with the charity experiencing a 450% increase in demand over the past two years.

Hannah Winter, Head of Fundraising at The Joshua Tree, said: "We're incredibly grateful to Samantha and our whole group of trekkers for taking on this inspiring challenge in support of families affected by childhood cancer. Fundraising initiatives like this help us to continue delivering essential emotional and practical support to families across the North West when they need it most."

The trek also continues growing support for The Joshua Tree from

businesses and communities across the region. Barratt Manchester and David Wilson Homes North West have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the charity through sponsorships, fundraising initiatives and participation in events supporting families affected by childhood cancer.

Samantha, who works for a local housebuilder, is encouraging friends, colleagues and the wider community to support the challenge through donations, with every contribution helping families access vital care and support services.

To donate, visit: www.justgiving.com/page/samantha-lafferty-1



Consultation set to start over possible Residents' Parking Zone near busy garden centre

LOCAL Councillor Neil Johnson has welcomed the launch of a consultation into a possible Residents Parking Zone along Warrington Road in Glazebury, adjacent to Bents Garden Centre.

This is an issue Cllr Johnson has been working on for a long time. Last year, as reported by Warrington Worldwide, he canvassed all residents in the area to hear directly from houses affected and spoke to all those inside the proposed Residents Parking Zone personally.

Following on from concerns raised regarding overflow parking from the garden centre on the highway during pressured times of the year such as Christmas, the Council have now agreed to offer a residents parking zone for those dwellings that do not have (or

could not create) off street parking capabilities. The Council has put together a consultation document that will be hand delivered in the area.

Due to the policy criteria, the Council are not permitted to offer this to dwellings with driveways and unfortunately this cannot be open to exception.

Cllr Johnson said: "I am very happy to speak to any residents once they receive the consultation documents. They will be able to see which properties this applies to via the colour coded map that will be included."

"This has the potential to be a very beneficial solution to long term parking problems in the area. I hope that the Council will take on board any feedback they receive, after

which we can implement this long sought-after solution for the benefit of local people. I will work to ensure that nothing proceeds without the full involvement of residents in the area, but I think this is a very

positive step forward which I have been pleased to work alongside the community to achieve. We should welcome this consultation, which will hopefully allow the scheme to progress."



Strong community turnout over possible plans for 200 new homes

AN estimated 70 residents attended the Croft Parish Council meeting held at Croft Memorial Hall recently, highlighting the significant level of community interest in the emerging proposals for possibly 200 new homes on land at Turret Hall Farm.

The meeting provided an opportunity for residents to hear an update on the current position, ask questions and share their views on the early-stage proposals involving the land off Lord Street in the village.

A wide range of topics were discussed, including traffic and highway capacity, local healthcare provision, school places, environmental considerations, Green Belt and Grey Belt policy, and the cumulative impact of development across North Warrington.

Parish Councillors also outlined the current status of the proposals and explained the role of the Parish Council within the planning system should a formal planning application be submitted in the future.

It was stressed that no planning application has yet been lodged and that any future proposal would be subject to consultation and determination by Warrington Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority.

Croft Parish Council Chair, Cllr Stuart Mann, thanked residents for attending and for the constructive and respectful manner in which the

meeting was conducted.

Cllr Mann said: "The turnout demonstrates just how important this issue is to many people in our community. It is vital that residents have access to clear and accurate information and understand how they can participate in the planning process should an application come forward.

"I would like to thank everyone who attended the meeting and contributed to the discussion. I would also like to recognise the many residents who have already stepped forward to help keep their neighbours informed. Whether through conversations, community groups, social media or simply sharing information with friends and family, their efforts have helped ensure that local people are aware of the proposals and able to take part in the discussion.

"The strength of community engagement we have seen so far has been encouraging and demonstrates how much people care about the future of the village. The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that residents continue to have access to clear information and opportunities to engage as matters develop."



Following the meeting, the Parish Council confirmed that it will continue to provide updates through its website and email notification service.

Residents are encouraged to register for updates to ensure they receive the latest information on planning matters affecting the village.

The next meeting of Croft Parish Council will take place on Tuesday 28 July 2026 at the memorial hall and residents are welcome to attend.

Further information is available on the Croft Parish Council website: Planning Matters: www.croftpc.co.uk/planning-matters/ Developments for Consideration:

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Colourful Birchwood Carnival descends "highlights of the year"

The 43rd annual Birchwood Carnival drew thousands of local residents to Birchwood Forest Park for a day of community celebration.

The highly anticipated event featured a colourful 'Flower Power' procession, live entertainment, and a wide array of free family-friendly activities.

Mayor of Warrington Cllr. Sagheer Zaman described Birchwood Carnival as "a truly brilliant community event and a fantastic day out for all ages. Definitely one of the highlights of the year!"

The festivities kicked off with the vibrant 'Flower Power' procession winding its way through the park.

The procession was led by the high-energy Batida Rio Samba Band. The band's enthusiasm had attendees smiling and dancing along.

A fancy dress competition followed, showcasing brilliant creativity from residents.

The main arena buzzed all afternoon with a variety of exciting performances and demonstrations. The Little Nippers Terrier Display

Team provided fast-paced racing. Ridgeside Falconry offered spectacular birds of prey displays. Northern Starr Dance delivered engaging community dance routines. Magic shows and The Creepy Crawley Show captivated younger audiences.

Attendees of all ages enjoyed a wide range of interactive attractions and local displays. A fun dog show and traditional donkey rides took place.

Thrill-seekers enjoyed a funfair, climbing wall, wipeout challenge, and rodeo surfboard.

Around 25 charity, craft, and commercial stalls were on-site to explore. Free interactive workshops offered drumming, crafts, and circus skills.

Birchwood Carnival proved once again to be a highlight of the local calendar. It successfully brought the Birchwood community together for an unforgettable day of fun and celebration.

Pictures: John Hopkins



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The Gardening Guide



Cut back your basket to give it a new lease of life - follow up by giving extra attention to feeding and watering

Simon Bax,
Plant Area Specialist

- July is the month for hedges - newly planted hedges will need watering regularly and if they are straggly they can be lightly trimmed to encourage growth
- Watering is crucial this month so remember to look after your containers and baskets
- You can still sow crops such as carrots, turnips and fast maturing salad crops
- Remember to sit down and enjoy what you have created - an ideal time to relax with friends, a glass of wine and a barbecue!



Discover great garden and lifestyle tips from the Bents team. Visit our Bents Experts Instagram page or scan the QR code to find out more.

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Celebrating 35 years of a “can do” culture at Disability Awareness Day 2026

THE 35th annual Disability Awareness Day (DAD) will officially be held in Warrington on Sunday, 12 July 2026, opening its gates at 10:00 am to welcome thousands of visitors to the beautiful grounds of Walton Hall and Gardens.

Organised by the Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP), this year’s landmark event marks three and a half decades of promoting a positive “can-do” culture.

It stands proudly as the world’s largest voluntary-led, pan-disability exhibition and independent living expo.

The mammoth undertaking is made possible through the vital support of its principal sponsors, regional water supplier United Utilities who are supported by various corporate sponsors and supporters.

Dave Thompson MBE DL, Co-founder of Warrington Disability Partnership, said: “The continued backing from United Utilities and our other generous sponsors ensures that the event remains entirely free to enter, providing a vital, accessible platform for the community.

“The corporate social responsibility from partners is more critical than ever,” added Dave, who led the setting up the charity after breaking his neck playing American Football in 1989. “This support directly aids families navigating independent living, health, and mobility needs.”

While the main exhibition takes

place on Sunday, it serves as the grand finale to an entire week of complementary, fun-packed activities.

Starting days prior, the tented village at Walton Hall and Gardens will host a series of specialised events featuring events for carers, disabled children and young people, Dementia Awareness and two evening events showcasing inclusive talent.

“DAD Week” concludes on Friday evening with Queen tribute band “I Want It All” performing in the dedicated Arts Marquee.

When the main event starts on Sunday, visitors will find nearly 200 exhibitors spanning statutory services, local businesses, and voluntary organisations.

Together, they will offer expert advice on mobility equipment, vehicle adaptations, holidays, employment opportunities, support groups and services.

Beyond essential information, DAD 2026 promises a vibrant festival atmosphere featuring:

- The Main Aren for family entertainment and community performances.
- The Sports Zone provides opportunities to try scuba diving,

wheelchair sports, and adapted games.

- The Arts & Performing Marquees provide live music, inclusive dance troupes, arts and crafts, plus a dedicated silent disco.
- A classic car show will include WDP’s Invacar AC70 and their disability timeline.
- New for 2026 is the Viking reenactment and the Viking village.

The exhibition runs from 10:00 am until 4:30 pm. To ensure maximum accessibility, organisers provide a free wheelchair and mobility scooter loan service on-site and

British Sign Language interpreters.

A free accessible, complimentary park-and-ride bus service will be available from Wilderspool Park, and a free accessible bus service will run from the Warrington Bus Interchange provided courtesy of Warrington’s Own Buses (see website for times).

Come along to celebrate community togetherness, discover cutting-edge independent living aids, and support the incredible “DAD Army” of volunteers making it all happen.

For more detail visit www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk



#DAD2026

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Something prehistoric is coming to Bents' hidden garden



This summer, Bents Garden & Home is set to unleash a Jurassic-sized adventure, transporting visitors back in time with the arrival of Dinosaurs in the Hidden Garden, launching from 1st July and offering roarsome experiences throughout the school holidays.

Families can look forward to an exciting new and unforgettable outdoor activity as giant dinosaurs take over the pathways of Bents Hidden Garden. Set within these unique surroundings, the trail promises a prehistoric journey filled with discovery, exploration and surprises around every corner.

Visitors will be invited to follow the trail through the gardens, where they will encounter life-sized dinosaurs nestled within the landscape, creating the feeling of stepping into a lost world hidden in plain sight.

These towering prehistoric creatures are brought to life with realistic movements and sounds, creating a truly immersive experience and an exciting adventure for children and adults alike. Interactive activity tents will be located along the way, providing visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the dinosaurs they encounter on their journey.

Says Matthew Bent, Managing Director at Bents Garden & Home: "We're incredibly excited to welcome these incredible dinosaurs to our Hidden Garden this summer! It's a fantastic opportunity to bring something truly special to families during the school holidays. The hidden nature of our garden makes it the perfect setting for a prehistoric adventure, and we can't wait for visitors to explore and discover what's lurking along the trail."

The experience will offer a fun and engaging day out for children and adults alike, combining outdoor exploration with imaginative play in a safe and family-friendly

environment.

Dinosaurs in the Hidden Garden opens at Bents on Wednesday 1st July and will be in residence until Sunday 6th September. Ticketing information can be found at bents.co.uk



New partnership to bring padel, gym and wellness facilities to village

A new partnership has been launched to bring new padel courts, gym facilities, and a wider wellness offering to the heart of Culcheth, alongside a long-term commitment to community sport in the village.

The collaboration marks a significant moment for Ace Padel and Culcheth Sports Club.

Culcheth Sports Club, a long-standing pillar of community life in Culcheth, has built a reputation for providing inclusive, accessible, and vibrant spaces for local residents. Ace Padel, known for its bold identity, community-driven ethos, and commitment to 'Padel with Purpose', saw immediate alignment with Culcheth Sports Club's values from the very first conversation.

As part of the partnership, Ace Padel has acquired Legacy Health & Fitness Club, a gym that has been part of the Culcheth Sports Club site for a number of years. The club will continue to operate as normal under Ace Padel's ownership, with the same facilities its members know and value, and plans to develop the offering further as the site evolves. Alongside this, Ace Padel is developing a new padel facility on the club's grounds and construction has begun on a set of high-quality courts finished in Ace Padel's iconic red. The site will feature three covered courts, ensuring players can enjoy the sport year-round, regardless of the weather.

Together, the existing gym, new padel courts, and a planned reformer

Pilates offering will develop the site into a community sport and wellness hub – a place where people of all ages and abilities can stay active, connect, and feel part of something that genuinely belongs to Culcheth.

The design of the padel facility reflects Ace Padel's belief that the sport should be accessible, welcoming, and enjoyable for everyone, from first-time players to seasoned competitors.

Jamie Reynolds, CEO and Co-Founder of Ace Padel, said: "The alignment with Culcheth Sports Club was apparent from our very first conversation. We're driven by the same purpose – supporting the local community, making sport and wellness accessible to everyone, and building something with real longevity. Culcheth is exactly the kind of place we want to be."

Chair of Culcheth Sports Club, Gary Monaghan, said: "This is a significant moment for the club and for the village. Bringing facilities of this quality to the people of Culcheth will help safeguard the future of the club and introduce everything we have to offer to a whole new generation of members of all ages. We're delighted to welcome Ace Padel."

For Ace Padel, this project is about far more than building courts. It represents a long-term commitment to becoming part of Culcheth's social fabric. The team is eager to integrate into village life, working hand-in-hand with Culcheth Sports Club's leadership, volunteers, and members to enhance what already makes the club such a valued community asset.

Ace Padel will take an active role in local outreach; delivering programmes that support schools, charities, and businesses across the area. From junior development initiatives to inclusive events and partnerships with local organisations, Ace Padel aims to ensure that the benefits of padel extend well beyond the court. The facility will be staffed by Ace Padel employees, bringing the company's warmth, customer focus, and community-centred approach to every interaction.

This partnership reflects a shared vision for the future of sport and wellbeing in Culcheth. Both Ace Padel and Culcheth Sports Club believe in creating spaces where people can connect, stay active, and feel part of something bigger. The new padel facility, alongside the existing gym and new wellness programmes, will not only introduce

one of the world's fastest-growing sports to the village but will also strengthen the club's role as a hub for health, social connection, and community pride.

This is a new chapter for Culcheth – built on collaboration, shared purpose, and a belief in the power of sport and wellbeing to bring people together. Ace Padel is proud to join the Culcheth Sports Club community and looks forward to building something truly special for the village.



The Raven looks forward to its third anniversary

AUGUST the 12th will mark the third anniversary of the Raven Inn. As the Raven gears up for a celebration, Manager Adam and his staff are working hard to provide new, innovative and tasty dining options.

Not forgetting the established favourites, craft ales, dog friendly welcome and true community pub atmosphere.

On top of all of that, the Raven has just launched its new menu, featuring many exciting new dishes, including some signature dishes, whilst maintaining the firm favourites.

Spokesperson Peter Sturman says, "We recognise the need to constantly listen to what our patrons and our shareholders are telling us. "In these days where things can

be a bit tight, the Raven really has to be on its toes.

Our Feel Good Friday, with fish, hand cut chips, home made tartare sauce & mushy peas plus live music, all for under a tenner, is really going down a storm. Eat in or take away, it is exceptional value.

"Our steak & frites & wine deal on a Saturday evening has also taken off.

With the popular quiz night on Tuesday, jam night on Wednesday, the aim is to cater for and accommodate as many members of our community as possible.

These days, in the hospitality industry, if you stand still, you end up going backwards. The Raven will always be on the front foot"

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Culcheth Probus Club in healthy position

CULCHETH PROBUS Club recently held their AGM at the Village Club, Wigshaw Lane.

The President welcomed members to the meeting and he and the Treasurer then gave a summary of the club's meetings, actions and finances for the year, which showed the club to be in a healthy financial position and an improved membership. The meeting was well attended and the officers of the club for the coming

year were duly appointed with Jeff Noneley continuing as President for his second term of office

The Club meets at 10 am every second Wednesday of the month at the Village Club on Wigshaw Lane, where members enjoy morning coffee and a chance to meet, before listening to the day's visiting speaker.

These talks are given by professional speakers on a very wide and interesting range of subjects.

Probus is a national organisation for retired, or semi-retired business personnel, If you are interested in joining and would like further information please contact President Jeff Noneley on 07722 696 1784.



Fellow WI member reveals adoption shock

Author and artist Barbara Attwood, herself a member of the WI in Widnes, was the speaker at the June meeting of Croft WI.

Barbara spoke about her book "The Blue Plastic Cow", which tells the true story of her search for her birth mother after the shock revelation, at the age of twelve, that she had been an adopted child. She was adopted as a baby in 1947 by a family who lived on the banks of the River Mersey in Widnes.

A happy, loving childhood was enjoyed by Barbara, along with a sister and two brothers and, being the youngest, she was quite spoiled. Her siblings were always jealous of friends who had babies in the family and when Barbara came along their mother told them that she was a Christmas present. Unfortunately her idyllic existence was rudely interrupted at the age of twelve by the shock diagnosis of a brain tumour. During her initial consultation, which included a 20 minute IQ test, the neurologist treating her said she had done well, then talked about relationships and, without any consideration of the consequences, said "You do know you are adopted". This was an absolute and utter shock and caused her to resent her mother for not telling her she was adopted. After a successful brain operation, she became quite argumentative and rebellious towards her mother, who eventually told her that she had been abandoned by her birth mother. A strange fact in this story was that her birth mother, called Carole, had found out who had adopted her baby and their address and gone and knocked on the door (of course this would never happen today). Carole explained

who she was and Barbara's mother invited her in. From then on she was known as "Auntie Carole" and visited for 3 years when Barbara was small. This arrangement continued until there was an objection by Barbara's grandmother, after which she was told not to come again, Carole left a small blue plastic cow toy for Barbara, hence the title of the book, but the fact that Carole was her birth mother was never mentioned, Barbara just thought "Auntie Carole" had stopped visiting. The blue plastic cow is still a treasured possession to this day.

Many more interesting, emotional and humorous stories were related about rebellious teenage years working in Liverpool, along with photos of her visits to the Cavern Club and photos of a happy childhood. Barbara realised as she got older just how much she loved her mother, father and siblings and how much care and love she had been shown as a child. She also realised that adoption was treated so very differently in the era in which she grew up. It wasn't until she was 40 years old that she decided to trace her birth mother and she told of many fruitless

searches, but did manage to meet her birth father and was relieved to learn that she had been conceived in love and that her birth mother and father had a very passionate and loving relationship that just didn't work out. The sad ending to the story was that Carole had died before Barbara could meet her.

A vote of thanks was given by Barbara's friend Jill Hillam and her book and artworks were on display and could be bought by members.

The competition was won by Lesley Lloyd, 2nd Liz Jones, 3rd Merron Mitchell.

Diary Dates
 Scrabble Group - 1st Wednesday of month 7pm The Plough, Croft
 Singing for Fun - 1st Wednesday of month 2pm Christ Church Hall
 Bowls & Chat - For info contact Vicki Gaskell 01925 764129
 Walking Netball - Every Thursday .5.15 to 6.15pm Croft Memorial Hall
 Darts - Every Tuesday 7.30pm contact Jill Hillam 07759 803037
 Readers Group - Last Tuesday of month 10am Christ Church Hall
 WI Meeting 3rd Wednesday of month 7.30pm Croft Memorial Hall

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