

Culcheth Life

Magazine

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A look back at history

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Editor's Opinion



There comes a point when the debate about housing stops being about individual planning applications and starts being about the future of an entire community. I believe Culcheth and Croft are rapidly approaching that point.

Residents are not opposed to housing simply because they do not want new neighbours. Nor is this about pulling up the drawbridge and saying nobody else should be allowed to live here.

It is about balance — and whether our villages can absorb the scale of development now being proposed without fundamentally changing their character and placing even greater pressure on already stretched services.

The latest proposals include up to 200 homes at Turret Hall Farm in Croft and a further 450 homes on land west of Culcheth. There are also other developments and proposals across the wider North Warrington area.

Individually, developers can make each scheme appear perfectly reasonable. But communities do not experience developments individually. They experience them collectively.

A new estate means more cars on roads that were never designed for such volumes of traffic. More children needing school places. More patients requiring GP appointments. More demand on dentists, public transport, drainage, utilities, shops and other local services.

And these pressures do not

magically disappear because a planning application is considered on a different day, by a different committee. That is why I have some sympathy with the growing calls for a genuinely joined-up approach to development across Culcheth and Croft.

There is another issue which cannot simply be brushed aside — the loss of green fields. Once agricultural land and open countryside have been covered with bricks, tarmac and concrete, it is gone. We cannot recreate the landscape that existed before.

Warrington's housing requirements are real. So is the need for affordable homes. The argument that some land can now be classified as "Grey Belt" does not automatically make the infrastructure challenges disappear. Indeed, Croft Parish Council has highlighted the need for proper consideration of transport, environmental and social impacts as Warrington's Local Plan is updated.

The question I would ask our planners and politicians is a straightforward one, where is the infrastructure plan to match the housing plan?

If we are going to add hundreds of homes, show us the roads that will

cope. Show us the school places. Show us the healthcare capacity. Show us how drainage and flooding risks will be addressed. Show us the investment in public transport. Even more worrying, Warrington Borough Council is already overwhelmed with its workload and with huge financial cuts and job losses looming, how can it cope with additional work loads?

Residents have every right to demand answers before the first brick is laid — not after the problems have become impossible to solve.

Culcheth and Croft are attractive places to live precisely because they retain a village character and have open countryside around them. We should not lose sight of that in the rush to meet housing targets. Development is inevitable. Sensible development is not only possible — it is essential. But there is a world of difference between building the homes communities genuinely need and allowing our villages to become convenient targets on a housing spreadsheet.

The green fields around Culcheth and Croft are not simply empty spaces waiting to be built upon. They are part of what makes these communities what they are.

And once they are gone, no planning condition will bring them back.



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Plans for Battle of Winwick memorial submitted to borough council

PLANS for a memorial for the historic Battle of Winwick – the last major battle of the English Civil War – have been submitted to Warrington Borough Council.

The proposals, put forward by the Battle of Winwick Society, are for land at Hermitage Green, Golborne Road, Winwick. They involve two cast-iron bench seats and three information signs.

Planning officers are currently studying the proposals.

The site of the battle has for years been unrecognised as an important conflict of the Second Civil War.

But it was Listed in 2018 thanks to the efforts of Richard Ward, who lives on the battlefield, and the

Battlefield Trust. Winwick Parish Council has given permission for the memorial to be built, subject to planning consent.

The battle took place in August, 1648 when Cromwell's New Model Army defeated the largely Scottish Royalist forces.

The Royalist forces chose a highly defensible position at Red Bank, utilizing a swollen stream, high earth banks, narrow lanes and thick hedges along the Wigan-to-Warrington road to stall the

Parliamentarians. The battle was a fierce, close-quarters engagement.

The Royalist infantry defended the pass with extreme "push of pike" and musket fire, successfully forcing Cromwell's vanguard to give ground initially. However, Cromwell's veteran cavalry and infantry rallied, eventually flanking and breaking the Royalist defensive line. The remaining Royalist foot soldiers retreated into the village of Winwick, making a final, desperate stand at St Oswald's Church.

Musket ball scars from the fighting can still be seen on the church walls today.

The Royalist infantry force was completely destroyed. Roughly 1,000 to 1,600 Royalists were killed, and another 2,000 were captured on the field. In contrast, Cromwell's forces lost only about 100 men.

The surviving Royalist cavalry fled south but surrendered unconditionally five days later.



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Fury as news of proposed gypsy traveller transit site revealed

A councillor who quit the Labour group at Warrington town hall over controversial plans for a gypsy traveller site at Croft has expressed his fury over a new plan to locate a site in the village.

Cllr Neil Johnson, who now sits as an independent on the borough council, said: "The news that the Council are once again pursuing plans for a gypsy/traveller transit site in Croft is astonishing.

"It is a betrayal of our entire community and everyone who lives here. I am absolutely furious.

"The Council Cabinet have behaved appallingly, by purchasing a property and surrounding land without any public consultation, discussion, openness or transparency.

"Once again, we find that these arrangements have been made behind closed doors.

"One of the Labour councillors for this ward, Matt Smith, is a member of the Cabinet. He must have been party to these discussions. He must have read the papers which described plans to purchase this site. What did he say or do to protect the interests of our village? Did he act with integrity and stand up for us, or did he sit there in silence while yet more plans were passed that will have a devastating impact on Croft? I call on him to speak out publicly and tell us clearly and without ambiguity:

"What did he know? When did he know it? Why did he keep this

secret – again?

"It should not have taken the studios research of the Parish Council to uncover the fact that this purchase has been made. I was not aware of it, and I represent the area. It is totally unacceptable for ward members not to be informed that these significant plans were underway. It is even more unacceptable that Cabinet members should act as 'secret keepers' and shield these unwanted proposals from the public.

"I maintain my earlier position: Croft is not a suitable location for a gypsy/traveller transit site. The road network will not accommodate this kind of development. We are already under significant strain with proposals for swathes of new houses in both Croft and Culcheth. Existing house prices will undoubtedly be affected.

"We need to look seriously at why Croft is being asked to shoulder a much bigger burden than other parts of Warrington.

"These plans are unjust and unacceptable. I will stand with the community and fight them all the way.

"I call on Labour councillors Matt Smith and Janet Seddon to do the decent thing and urge their

leadership to revoke these plans with immediate effect. I call on the Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols to convene a meeting with the Council Chief Executive as a priority and inform her in no uncertain terms that this is not a proper location for a gypsy/traveller transit site and that the planning application should be withdrawn immediately."

Cllr Johnson famously quit the Labour group after he leaked plans for a transit site on Kenyon Lane, Croft, which were eventually scrapped in October 2024, at considerable cost to the council.

In response, Cllr Matt Smith, who had earlier joined dozens of protesters in the village opposing a controversial housing development, said: "As your local Labour councillors, we know that recent news regarding a potential transit site on Winwick Lane will naturally raise questions across Culcheth, Glazebury, and Croft. We want to reassure you that we are here for our community, listening, and keen to hear your considered feedback.

"While we understand local concerns, it is worth looking at why this specific site is being considered by Warrington Borough Council:

- Minimal Impact on Local Homes: Located very close to Junction 22 of the M6, the site offers direct access to the strategic road network while keeping any impact on residential properties to a minimum.

- Immediate Police Powers: Without an official transit site, moving unauthorised encampments off our green spaces and local sites can be a long, costly process. Having a designated facility grants the police immediate legal powers to direct encampments straight off other local land or out of the borough entirely.

"This would strictly be a short-term facility (up to 28 days), with users paying fees and utility costs upfront. The site would be monitored and managed, only those who have registered and paid in advance could access the site.

"Nothing is set in stone – this project cannot move forward without full planning permission. A formal application will go through the usual transparent planning process, giving everyone full opportunity to submit their views.

"Our door is always open. Please feel free to get in touch with us directly; we welcome your input," he added.

Defending the selection of the site, a Warrington Borough Council



spokesperson said: "We have a long-established requirement to provide a Gypsy and Traveller transit site in Warrington. The provision of a transit site will help the council meet its legal obligations under the Housing Act 2004 in relation to accommodation needs for the travelling community whilst helping to reduce unauthorised encampments across the borough."

The council says a permanent transit site would also strengthen enforcement powers available to police.

The spokesperson added: "A permanent transit site would bring a number of benefits for Warrington. It would strengthen the council's ability to manage unauthorised encampments by enabling the police to use powers available under Sections 62A-62E of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct travellers to an authorised site within the borough. Failure to comply, or returning within three months after being directed away, may constitute an offence."

Pointing to examples elsewhere in Cheshire, the council argues similar facilities have already proved effective.

The spokesperson added: "Transit sites have been used successfully in neighbouring authorities to provide short-term accommodation for travelling communities and to reduce unauthorised encampments. Halton Council has operated a transit site for several years and has seen significantly fewer unauthorised encampments. Since opening a transit site in early 2025, Cheshire East has also reported a reduction in the number and frequency of encampments, while Cheshire West and Chester is progressing plans for its own facility."

The authority also highlighted the financial burden of dealing with unauthorised encampments without a dedicated facility.





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Gustaffson return for special St Oswald's Church gig

Gustaffson, the five-piece Manchester band who are currently on a UK tour, return to the venue of their first-ever Warrington gig – St Oswald's Church, Winwick – for an evening performance.

Lead singer, Andrew Gower, singer, songwriter and actor, has strong connections with Warrington as he was educated at Great Sankey High School, where he enjoyed the teaching and facilities in the school's drama and music department. He went on to study at the Oxford School of Drama and has starred in leading roles in several TV hit shows.

Andrew's song lyrics and music are all about the telling of stories. Hit singles such as Northern Baby, Champagne Socialist and a debut EP the "Jacaranda", are based on Liverpool's famous music venue. It stars well-known actress Sue Johnstone, in a cameo role. Andrew described Sue as a fitting Liverpool legend for a song about a Liverpool iconic venue where she remembered dancing in the sixties.

The Winwick Church setting is one of the venue choices of the group's UK tour journey. The tour's aim is to define what it takes to make real music as a band in 2026. Gustaffson, who have played at venues in Manchester, Liverpool and London, are quickly being renowned for their curation of specific venue, standalone shows that become calendar-shaping events for their audiences. The band celebrated the success

of their debut Elbow album "Black and White Movie", which gained critical and commercial success, with a spectacular sold-out show at London's Bush Hall.

The band finished 2025 with an Elbow-produced single "Dance to the Algorithm" – a retro funk which featured on Granada TV and included Gustaffson in the Manc and Audios North's "best artists of 2025" alongside Richard Ashcroft and the Charlatans. The group are due to return to the studio later this year to record their second album with Elbow's Craig Potter.

Gustaffson's connection to St. Oswald's and their enthusiasm to return stems from the filming of a video for their then-new single "Flowers" at the church in November 2023. They were so impressed with the quality of the church's sound reproduction and its atmospheric setting that they booked an evening performance in June 2024 and donated some of the ticket takings to the church.

As Andrew says, "You walk into St Oswald's Church and it instantly tells a story. As soon as we were looking for a venue for the music video, I knew the church would be perfect. The building has a unique history and as a band it is all about playing venues which give our

audience the best experience. We felt very fortunate to become part of its history on that performance night and are delighted to make a return."

The band will be returning to the studio this year to record their second album with Elbow's Craig

Potter.

Friday 25 September, 7 p.m.
Gustaffson live at St. Oswald's Church. Tickets £15 per head. Licensed bar and refreshments. For information and tickets visit www.achurchnearyou.com/church15319



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New padel courts and gym relaunch with free community

NEW padel courts and a gym relaunch are set to take place in Culcheth and will be celebrated with a free community day after planners gave the development the green light.

Culcheth will get its first padel courts on Saturday 5th September, with Ace Padel Culcheth marking the opening with a free, family community day at The Datan – alongside a full relaunch of the gym that now sits within the Ace Padel portfolio.

Warrington Borough Council recently approved plans for three new padel tennis courts at Culcheth Sports Club on Charnock Road. The project, operated via a partnership with Ace Padel, includes three courts under a lightweight Perspex

canopy, low-level wall-integrated lighting, and tree planting for biodiversity net gain.

Ace Padel has also acquired the on-site Legacy Health and Fitness Club, which is being rebranded to Ace Fitness and Reformer, to run alongside the new racket facilities.

The free community day will include padel taster, junior, and intro sessions plus tournaments on the new courts, and beginner reformer Pilates and gym sessions as the gym relaunches with a new identity, new timetable, and new

memberships.

The bar will be open and a BBQ hosted by the community café, with a bouncy castle, face painting, market and activity stalls, and a DJ and live entertainment running into the evening. The Datan is also home to dance, tennis, football and a wider community beyond padel and the gym, and this event is designed to bring all of it together – a hub for all.

Jamie Reynolds, Co-founder of Ace Padel, said: "This isn't just about opening new courts or a gym rebrand; it's about strengthening what The Datan has always been – a fitness, wellbeing

and community hub, and the heart of Culcheth. From the café to the Ukrainian Family Hub to the sports on offer, that community spirit is already here, and we want the 5th September to bring all of it together in one day. Whether you've never picked up a padel racket, haven't been to a gym in years, or you're already part of The Datan community, there'll be something for you."

When: 9:30 – 22:00, Saturday 5th September

Where: The Datan, Charnock Rd, Culcheth, WA3 5SH

The event is free to attend and open to all ages.

Bents celebrates double award success ahead

Bents Garden & Home is celebrating success with two prestigious and widely respected awards, both providing the perfect start to a landmark year as the family-owned and run business prepares to celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2027.

Having recently been crowned Best Destination Garden Centre in the North West at the GCA regional awards, it has also been officially recognised by the 2026 UK's Best Workplaces for Women™ and is listed within the top 100 large company category, alongside

organisations including Tropic Skincare and Lindt.

Founded in 1937, Bents has grown from Alfred and Margaret Bent selling roses from their front garden, just yards from the Centre's current location in Glazebury, into one of the UK's leading

destination garden centres. Both awards recognise Bents continued commitment to its colleagues, who remain at the heart of the family business.

The latest GCA accolade also recognises the continued commitment to quality, innovation



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h to be celebrated day



of 90th anniversary

and customer experience that have also been fundamental to Bents' success for almost nine decades.

The regional title follows the GCA's rigorous annual inspection programme, during which member garden centres are independently assessed across every aspect of their business. From plant quality and visual merchandising to customer service, catering and innovation, every department is judged against the highest industry standards.

Following an unannounced inspection, Bents achieved one of the highest scores in the country, securing the title of Best Destination Garden Centre in the North West, along with regional awards for Best Customer Service, Food Hall and Catering.

Matthew Bent, Managing Director of Bents Garden & Home, said: "To receive this recognition from the Garden Centre Association is a fantastic achievement and one we're incredibly proud of, particularly as we prepare to celebrate our 90th anniversary next year."

The 2026 UK's Best Workplaces for Women list is made up of employers whose people have told Great Place To Work® UK they work for a place that is inclusive and equitable for all. The 350 companies on the list are committed to ensuring a reasonable balance

of women and men across the organisation; removing barriers to women's career advancement; and creating workplaces where all employees, regardless of gender, can flourish.

Benedict Gautrey, Managing Director of Great Place To Work UK says: "This year's UK's Best Workplaces for Women list celebrates businesses making a genuine difference day to day, not just in what they say, but in how people experience work. What matters most is that this recognition comes directly from women working in these organisations, who tell us they feel supported, valued, and able to grow."

"Our research demonstrates that these organisations creating high-trust environments are delivering stronger results, whether in financial outcomes, impact, or service delivery, alongside greater agility and resilience in the face of change. Congratulations to Bents for creating an environment where inclusion is clearly felt in practice."

Matthew added: "Both of these awards reflect the passion, commitment and expertise of every one of our colleagues and I'd like to thank every member of the team for the part they've played in these fantastic successes."

The Gardening Guide



Give evergreen hedges and topiary a final cut so they present a nice sharp profile throughout the winter.

Simon Bax,
Plant Area Specialist

- Make sure that pests such as slugs and snails and diseases such as mildew are dealt with as soon as they are seen
- Fruit trees can be planted now as they benefit from the warm soil and the cool air
- When the autumn rain arrives fertilise your lawn with a slow release autumn feed
- Reduce watering and feeding in preparation for the winter period when most plants go dormant and just need keeping moist



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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Winwick church to look back at some of its tragic history at heritage weekend event

One of the most historic churches in the North West, St Oswald's Church, Winwick, will open its doors to the public to celebrate its Heritage weekend on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September.

The weekend will feature talks by historians and researchers on two of the most tragic events in the history of this iconic building. One is the memorial commemorating the death almost 200 years ago, of Ellen (Turner) Legh, a young heiress, which united two of the richest families in the land in common grief.

The other will reveal new research into the Battle of Winwick, fought during the Civil War 350 years ago, when over 1,000 Scottish soldiers, supporters of King Charles the 1st, died at the hands of Cromwell's army. Over 1,500 men were taken prisoner. The Royalist army defeat led only a few months later, to the execution of the English king.

Photographs of the period, displays of weapons, the armour worn by the Scottish and English armies of those times and items found after the battle, will be on display at the church. Dr. Andrew Abram, secretary of the Battle of Winwick Society, will be giving an update on research projects in the past year which will include progress on plans to erect a permanent monument on the site of

the battlefield in Hermitage Green and news on some of the exciting finds from recent searches on the land.

Eileen Monies, volunteer historical researcher, Lyme Park, National Trust, will present a moving talk on the life and death of Ellen (Turner) Legh a young heiress, whose memorial is in the St Oswald's Legh family chapel. In 1826 Ellen was abducted from her boarding school by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a fortune hunter, when she was only 15 and tricked into marriage at Gretna Green. Her abductor was sent to Newgate prison. She met Thomas Legh of Lyme Hall, Disley, one of the magistrates at Wakefield's trial. They married in the following year. Three years later she died in childbirth aged 19 years.

Reverend Martin Fuller, parish priest at St Oswald's Church, will open the event. He said: This is a place with a fascinating history and has so much to offer. It will be a privilege and joy to celebrate such a rich heritage. I look forward to welcoming everyone to St Oswald's and to exciting revelations about the happenings in its past and in

the area surrounding it."

The church will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday 12 September. Reverend Martin Fuller will officiate at the opening at 11 a.m. followed by a talk by Andrew Abram secretary of the Battle of Winwick Society. 2.p.m.talk in Parish Hall by Eileen Monies, researcher and historian, Lyme Park, National Trust on the Ellen (Turner) Legh memorial and the circumstances which led to her death.

Sunday 13 September: Church open at 12 noon until 3 p.m. 1 p.m. Battlefield walk with society members.



Birchwood Park unveils new timeline celebrating 80 years of nuclear history

Birchwood Park, the North West's largest out-of-town business destination, has unveiled a new historical timeline installation celebrating 80 years since the former Risley site helped shape the UK's atomic energy programme.

Part of the Park's wider 80 Years of Nuclear campaign, the installation charts the site's evolution from a disused Second World War ordnance factory into the thriving business destination it is today.

Now home to more than 165 organisations, including over 30 businesses operating across the nuclear sector, Birchwood Park sits at the heart of one of the UK's most significant nuclear clusters. More than 6,000 people work across Warrington's nuclear community, the UK's only region which spans the full nuclear lifecycle.

With the sector forecast to contribute more than £15 billion to the North West economy by 2030 and nuclear employment expected to grow by almost 49%, the timeline also highlights the opportunities the industry continues to create for the region and future generations.

The timeline showcases key moments from the past eight decades, celebrating the people, organisations and innovations that have shaped the site, while helping today's workforce and future generations better understand the role Birchwood Park has played in the UK's nuclear story.

As part of the celebrations, the Park is also inviting current and former employees, visitors, and members of the local community to share their memories, photographs,

and stories of life at the site, helping to preserve the personal history behind one of the region's most significant employment and innovation hubs.

Stories and photographs can be submitted via Birchwood Park's dedicated 80 Years of Nuclear webpage, where contributors are invited to help celebrate the people and moments that have shaped the Park over the past eight decades.

Linda Welsby, Leasing Manager at Birchwood Park, said: "For 80 years, Birchwood Park has been part of the UK's nuclear story, but it's also been a part of thousands of people's own stories. The timeline is a way of celebrating both.

As the site continues to evolve, it's important that we recognise the

heritage that has shaped the Park we know today. We're incredibly proud of the role it has played in supporting the UK's nuclear industry and the contribution it continues to make to the North West economy through the businesses and people based here.

"We're also hoping the timeline encourages people to share their own memories and helps a new generation discover the opportunities and careers that continue to be created here. We'd like to thank Norman Bird from UKNNL and the UK ARC Programme Alpha Heritage team for their support in helping bring this important piece of the Park's history to life."

Rachel O'Donnell, Chair of the

Northern Nuclear Alliance (NNA), said: "The Northern Nuclear Alliance exists to champion the organisations and capabilities that make the North West the number one region for nuclear services in the UK. Birchwood Park has been central to that story for 80 years, bringing together businesses that have helped shape the industry and continue to drive it forward today.

"Supporting initiatives like this is about recognising that heritage while also demonstrating the strength of the nuclear community we have here today. It's a story worth celebrating because it's also the foundation for the sector's future growth."



Call for “joined up” consideration of Culcheth and Croft developments

INDEPENDENT Councillor Neil Johnson says that proposed developments in the villages of Culcheth and Croft should not be considered in isolation and believes Warrington Borough Council must put a system in place to allow each of these proposals to be considered “in the round”.

Cllr. Johnson is referring to the recent planning application by Peel for 200 homes on land at Turret Hall Farm in Croft, a further planned 450 homes on land to the west of Culcheth, and a forthcoming application by Warrington Borough Council themselves for a gypsy/traveller transit site on Winwick Lane.

Cllr. Johnson said: “The process

for planning applications is that each one is considered individually on its own merits. This is highly convenient for those who wish to push through plans without any consideration of the wider context.

“In the case of Culcheth and Croft, however, we have three significant proposals forthcoming which, if successful, will change the face of our community forever. It is entirely wrong to consider any of these three applications in isolation.

“Any one of these applications will place a tremendous burden on our road network, our utilities, our shops and services. We need to adopt a sensible approach and ensure that some joined up thinking is applied. The Council cannot hold three separate planning committee meetings for three separate proposals in a such a small area, and at each one pretend that the other two proposals don’t exist!

“Councillors have a responsibility to ensure the best outcome for the community. These plans cannot be considered in isolation. If all three are approved,

it will be devastating for the future of Culcheth and Croft. Our villages will be unrecognisable. The Council needs to put a process in place to ensure that these developments are considered collectively, rather than individually. It is simply unfair that my ward of Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft is shouldering more

than its fair share of the burden in respect of housing targets. Our green spaces are at risk of being concreted over. The Council’s reckless plans for a gypsy/traveller site are only adding to the strain. We are reaching the stage where our road networks will be unable to cope.”



Raven Inn enters new chapter with transformation of The Raven’s Nest

HAVING just celebrated its third anniversary as a community pub, the Raven Inn continues to look to the future.

As with many ventures if you stand still for too long, you can end up going backwards.

The Community Benefit Society responsible for the Raven always looks to move forward in a positive way, whilst being mindful of doing so in a considered manner.

Work has been underway, for some time, on the ‘upstairs’ of the Raven.

The work is primarily being undertaken by volunteers.

‘The Saturday Crew’, were behind a lot of the work to transform the downstairs from a quiet awful state into the bustling vibrant Raven Inn it now is.

The Raven’s Nest is gradually being transformed into a space to complement The Raven Inn. Amongst other things The Raven’s Nest will contain a function room. Something many people have been asking for.

Spokesperson Peter Sturman

says, ‘The Saturday Crew really are a group of very committed and very special people. They have been working, often behind the scenes, since the Raven was first purchased in 2022. We would not be where we are without them and we would not be looking forward to The Raven’s Nest, in the near future, without their endeavours.’

As for the Raven Inn, it continues to be business as usual. In September we have regular favourites such as open mic night on the 5th, The Harper Brothers on

the 18th and Chris Schofield sings on the 25th.

“We are also very excited that the launch of our Christmas menu will take place on the September the 10th.

“All this along with our weekly Tuesday quiz nights and Wednesday jam nights.”

“The Raven aims to cater for all sections of our community. We always like to hear from anyone with innovative ideas.”

“We have just seen a hugely successful ‘Greek night’ the brainchild of shareholder Yannis, who also toiled away in the kitchen, that night.” added Peter.

Croft Wi meet the Magistrate

CROFT WI welcomed magistrate and motivational speaker Andrew Emmerson to their August meeting.

Magistrates are local citizen volunteers, they preside in court for a minimum of 13 days a year and undergo training for 5 days each year. They receive legal guidance from professional court legal advisers and can pass sentences comprising fines, community work and up to twelve months in prison.

The duties of a magistrate are vitally important and being in court can be a very stressful experience for all concerned. However, Andrew said he didn’t want to be too serious and he gave a presentation filled with humour but which also conveyed many interesting facts and much food for thought about his role. To get things started some members were given plastic paddles with numbers

on to hold up in turn and then guess what that number signified. These included:

18 - Minimum age to become a magistrate

75 - Retirement age

3 - Number of magistrates presiding in a court

57 - Average age of a magistrate (not the number of Heinz varieties, as some members guessed!)

90 - Percentage of crimes that are dealt with by magistrates

1361 - The year the ‘Justices of the Peace Act’ became law. There was a lot of unrest in England at the end of the 100 years war and to deal with this three or four wealthy men from each county were appointed to become JPs. In Warrington, Thomas Boteler, William Beamont, and members of the Parr family all served as local magistrates. JPs sat in judgement and had to agree on

appropriate sentencing for anyone found guilty of “offending, rioting or barrating”. Barratry is an old common-law crime of persistently stirring up quarrels or groundless lawsuits!

Nowadays many women become magistrates and the two final numbers to guess were:

1919 - Ada Summers, Mayor of Stalybridge, became the first female magistrate

55- Percentage of magistrates who are female in Cheshire today

President Merron Mitchell gave the vote of thanks to Andrew for such a lively and thought provoking presentation.

The competition “An article or subject that motivated you” was won by Janet Woods, 2nd Jill Hillam and 3rd Margaret Millward.



Concerns over delays in planning application for proposed anaerobic digestion plant

A local councillor has expressed concerns over planning application delays involving proposals for an anaerobic digestion plant at Winwick, Warrington.

It is now more than a year since the application was validated with local councillors and residents still awaiting clarity.

Local Cllr Stuart Mann said: "I'm concerned at just how long the planning application for the proposed anaerobic digestion plant at Highfield Lane, Winwick has been allowed to drag on.

"It was validated in July 2025. More than a year later, residents are still waiting for clarity.

"People quite reasonably ask how many opportunities an applicant should be given to amend, revise and respond before a decision is actually made.

"Whatever the technical reasons, the process now looks and feels open-ended, and that is damaging public confidence.

"I have asked Warrington Borough Council for a clear status update, what is still outstanding, whether any further extension has been agreed, and when this application is finally going to be determined."

Severn Trent Green Power is seeking planning permission to construct and operate an anaerobic digestion plant that would process thousands of tonnes of food and organic waste each year to produce

biogas and fertiliser. While the company claims the plant will support renewable energy targets and reduce landfill, the specific location and scale of the project have raised major concerns.

The plant would be located close to the village of Winwick, near homes, schools, and on green belt land of nationally historic importance raising questions about the suitability of the site for such an industrial development.

Cllr Mann has raised his concerns with town planners and Chief Executive Sarah Smith stating: "I also now need to raise a more fundamental concern about the length of this process and ask why the Local Planning Authority continues to hold the application open for further negotiation rather than determining the application that is before it.

"The application was validated on 21 July 2025, meaning it has now been live for well over a year. It is also more than 18 months since I was first contacted about the proposal by Severn Trent.

"When we corresponded in February, you confirmed that the Planning Performance Agreement had been signed on 1 July 2025 and that an extension of time had

been agreed until 26 March 2026. You also advised on 12 February that officers anticipated being able to conclude their assessment and formulate a recommendation following the reconciliation and narrowing of the outstanding issues.

"That date has now passed by almost five months.

"Since then, the Environment Agency issued its response of 29 April 2026. That response did not simply request minor clarification. The Environment Agency formally objected to the application, stated that the risks to groundwater were unacceptable and recommended that planning permission should be refused. It went further by expressing an objection to the principle of underground storage of pollutant-bearing materials at this particular location.

"I note this document is NOT on the planning portal.

"The applicant subsequently responded through Ayesa in May, (which is on the portal) challenging aspects of the Environment Agency's interpretation and seeking further dialogue. However, from the documents currently available on the public planning record, I cannot see that the Environment Agency's objection has subsequently been withdrawn or that the additional groundwater and hydrogeological assessments it requested have been published.

"I am therefore increasingly concerned about how long the process of allowing the applicant to seek to overcome objections can reasonably continue."

He went on to say: "If a further Extension of Time or revised PPA timetable has been agreed after 26 March 2026, please could you provide the date agreed, the revised determination date and confirm where this has been recorded on the public Planning Register.

"If no further Extension of Time is currently in place, please could you explain the procedural position and on what basis further amendments, information or negotiations are continuing to be entertained.

"Secondly, given WBC's own published guidance, I would like to understand why officers consider it appropriate to continue negotiating this application rather than determine it as submitted.

"There have now been substantial revised technical submissions, a full reconciliation and further correspondence following a statutory consultee objection.

"At what point does the Council consider that the scale and duration of amendments cease to represent reasonable clarification of an application and instead amount to significant changes which should properly require either determination of the existing application or submission of a new application?

"In particular, the February exercise involved re-notification and consultation on substantive technical issues. I would therefore be grateful if you could explain how officers reconciled that approach with the Council's published guidance that amendments significant enough to require re-notification on substantive issues will usually require a new application.

"Thirdly, I would appreciate a direct explanation as to why the Environment Agency's outstanding objection has not resulted in the application being recommended for refusal.

"I fully understand that officers should work positively and proactively with applicants and that a statutory consultee objection can sometimes be overcome. However, that cannot surely amount to an indefinite opportunity to amend an application until every reason for refusal has potentially been designed out.

"The Environment Agency's April response appears particularly significant because it went beyond requesting further information and expressed a concern about the suitability, in principle, of underground pollutant-bearing infrastructure at this location.

"If officers believe there remains a clear and realistic route by which that objection can be overcome, please could you explain what that route now is, what information or changes are required, and what deadline has been given to the applicant to provide them.

"If there is not currently a clear route to resolving that objection, I would like to understand why the application is not now being determined on the evidence before the Council?"



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Elvis comes to Culcheth for a night of music, fun and fundraising

Award-winning Elvis tribute act Kirk Kreole heads to Culcheth for a special fundraising night in support of local charity Creating Adventures.

On Friday 25th September 2026 at 7.30pm, the Toe Tappers will once again bring their fantastic fundraising support to Culcheth Village Club, hosting a special Elvis Tribute Night.

The headline act for the evening will be Kirk Kreole, the UK's Official Number 1 Elvis Tribute Act. Guests can look forward to an entertaining evening celebrating the music and magic of Elvis Presley, alongside performances from Beautiful Noise, plus a DJ to keep the party going.

Tickets are just £15 per person, with pie and peas available for only £2, making this a great-value night out for friends, families and Elvis fans alike.

And, most importantly, all funds raised from the event will be donated to Creating Adventures, helping the charity continue its work supporting adults with learning disabilities and autism across Warrington and the surrounding area. Booking Western European Vacations

The event is being organised by the Toe Tappers, who are once again showing their incredible commitment to Creating Adventures and the people it supports. Culcheth Village Club is also continuing its fantastic support by welcoming the fundraising event to the club.

Creating Adventures currently supports more than 100 adults each week through a wide range of activities including music, dance, drama, art, cookery, wellbeing and life-skills programmes. The charity is also working towards its ambitious goal of creating a permanent home for Creating Adventures – a place where members can learn, create, connect and thrive.

This special evening is a wonderful opportunity for the local

community to come together, enjoy a great night out and make a real difference at the same time.

For tickets, please contact Babs

McDermott on 07756 447414.

For further information about Creating Adventures and its work, visit www.creatingadventures.org.uk

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Another 250 homes to be built at Winwick?

A FURTHER 250 homes could be built at Winwick if Warrington planners give the go-ahead – in addition to the 154-dwelling St Oswald's Place development which won planning consent some two years ago.

Developers Bellway Homes are seeking an opinion from planning chiefs on whether a environmental impact assessment would be required in advance of a planning application for the new development, which would be immediately to the north of the St

Oswald's Place site.

This development would comprise up to 250 dwellings, designed to a low-to-medium density to reflect the local character of the nearby settlement.

The applicants say the scale, design and layout of the development would be carefully considered to complement the existing character of the local area. Any future layout would ensure permeability and integration with the surrounding area. A Public Right of Way to the north of the site would

be retained. The proposals provide pedestrian connectivity with the Phase 1 development. Pedestrian and cycle paths are introduced across the scheme, ensuring "walkability" and integration with the surrounding area. The northern boundary will comprise a green buffer to adjacent countryside.

The impacts from the scale and design of the proposed development are therefore not considered to produce significant adverse environmental effects.

When planning consent was sought for the earlier development there was some local opposition because of its proximity to the site of the famous Battle of Winwick – the last major battle of the English Civil War.

But the applicants say there will be no significant impact on the battlefield site.

A full planning application for the additional 250 homes is expected to follow.





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Sign up from 7pm,
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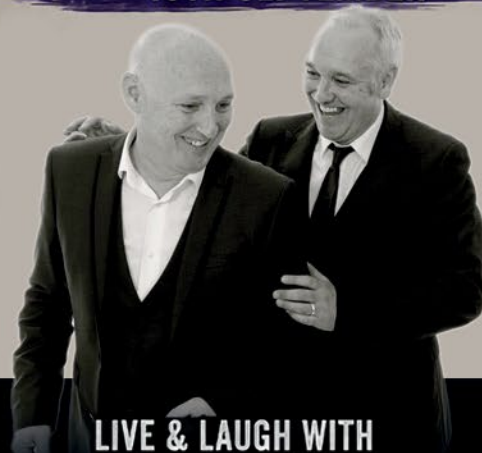
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