

No. 6

Summer 2025

KIRTON quarterly

a magazine for the Crediton community



INSIDE:

Crediton Bowling Club
St Lawrence Chapel, Threshers
Frank Letch (1944 – 2025)

and LOTS MORE

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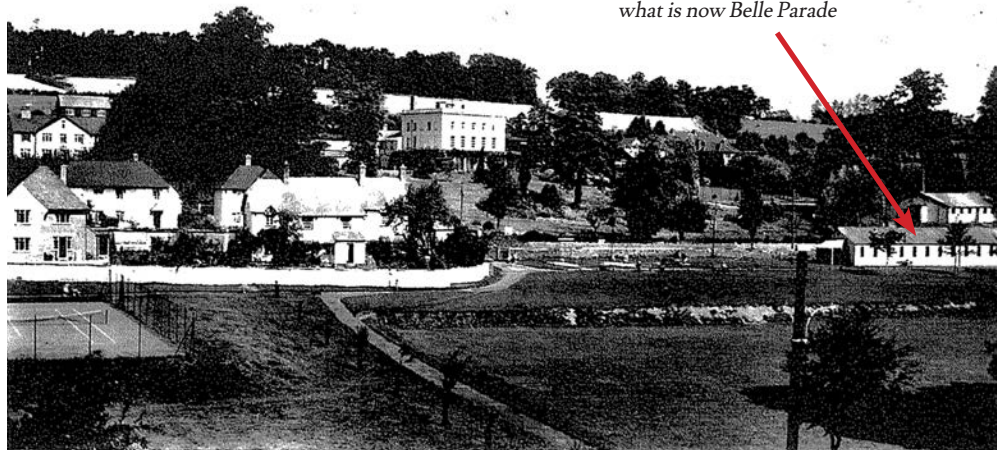
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Nourishment and Newcombes Meadow

Compare the arrival in Crediton of a 'drive-thru' McDonald's restaurant/takeaway with a very different venture started during the 2nd World War in Newcombes Meadow.

Whereas our new McDonald's fast-food outlet represents eating as convenient cheap entertainment - and is of questionable value nutritionally - in the early 1940s on the edge of Newcombes Meadow a long hut was built to house a British Restaurant – a kitchen and dining room serving nourishing daily meals at an inexpensive price, one of many set up by Winston Churchill's government during the 2nd World War. They were established partly to keep the population properly fed and healthy, and partly as a morale-booster during the dark days of wartime.

A photo from c.1949 shows Newcombes Meadow, with the former Newcombes house in the background, and the British Restaurant (on the far right of the picture) next to what is now Belle Parade



PLAYING FIELDS, CREDITON

Photo: Authors

From a holiday diary* written during the 2nd World War by Annie Larman, a visitor from London staying with friends at Yeoford . . . Thurs 19th August 1943: "We went into Crediton by the 10 train . . . [We] went to the British Restaurant for our dinner. We had quite a good meal. It was a new building and everything so nice and clean. There were about 35 tables each seating 4 persons arranged down the hall, and very large kitchen and serving room at the rear."

After the war, the building continued to be in use until at least the 1960s. It is still remembered by older residents as a domestic science classroom for Haywards School, and it was also used for adult education courses.

*With many thanks to historian Paul Cleave for the loan of this diary account.

Newcombes Meadow – a park without a focus?

Newcombes Meadow is a lovely green space in the middle of the town. Its recreational space, facilities and any future development are of key interest to many sectors of the community.

There have been many different sports played here. Until the mid-70s it was the home of Crediton United football club. (Goals for recreational soccer are still in place.) There were also tennis courts in the past. Since the 1930s Crediton Bowling Club has immaculately maintained its bowling green and clubhouse. If you enter the park from Union Road or Church Street you'll see notices prohibiting the playing of golf – which suggests that some might have been practising their strokes. Did someone get hit by a ball?

A children's playground was installed (and more recently upgraded) and is extremely well used. A paddling pool, popular with young families with toddlers, has been open during the summer months (though its current and future funding has been debated in council circles).

In 1960 Princess Margaret (the sister of the late Queen) unveiled a statue of St Boniface. In the 1970s a keen former mayor cajoled numerous local tradespeople to build a bandstand – something of a 'white elephant' in some people's eyes. The shady Jubilee Gardens area was created as a shrub-filled seating place. Latterly the park has been a focus of efforts to encourage wildlife and floral diversity, with new trees and pollinator-friendly planted areas.

Adequate and sensibly located toilet facilities have long been a simmering and as yet unsolved issue. Strikingly modern public conveniences were built over an obsolete water-tank at the Union Road entrance to the park, but these have been routinely vandalised - and often assumed closed. (Currently one cubicle is maintained for daily use by the town council.) There are proposals for a new toilet block close to the playground, but their installation has been delayed apparently until next year.

An idea for an indoor community facility in the centre of the park – café, meeting space, toilets etc – (similar to the ParkLife facility at Heavitree Pleasure Park, Exeter) has not been explored, but another proposal, for a 220-seat theatre and café space where the Union Road toilet block now stands, was given an airing by the Crediton Heart Project at a recent town council meeting.

A number of community initiatives take place in the park, such as this May's VE Day Picnic and the Big Boniface Bash in June (an irreverent celebration of our patron saint), occasional outdoor film screenings, not to forget Congregational Church-run community events every two years. However, without a secure and sheltered community building out of which to run these events, they will always be at the mercy of the elements.

There are also growing concerns about anti-social behaviour – drug-taking, alcohol abuse and tell-tale detritus left behind.

Newcombes Meadow is owned by Mid Devon District Council (along with numerous other parks and open spaces). Crediton Town Council has voted to open negotiations to have ownership transferred to the town council instead - curiously since the town council has no maintenance staff to look after it.

But who cares enough?

There is much that could be done to realise Newcombes Meadow as a place fit for the needs of today's whole community – for mental health and physical exercise; mental and physical well-being; for play, recreation and outdoor learning; for social contact and community cohesion - and for taking the dog for a walk.

Would you believe that nowhere, even, is the name of the park displayed anywhere – not at either of the three entrances to the park, nor even on signposts elsewhere in the town!

The park should be a first-choice destination for everyone. As things stand, it seems like it's just a big field with a number of separate things just plonked down – rather than a full-realised community asset. To achieve its potential, ideas and joined-up thinking, community support and political will-power are essential and, of course, funding.

Then perhaps a new version of the British Restaurant concept* could make a return to Newcombes Meadow – to counter the junk- and ultra-high-processed food evils of today - or even to replace the need for a food bank in the town? It could at least offer a decent tea and a loo for visitors to the park.

**Visit Crediton Museum's current exhibition The Home Front – Crediton in World War Two to learn more about the British Restaurant in Crediton*



*Newcombes Meadow: view of bandstand
seen from the Jubilee Gardens area*

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Crediton Town Council



Councillor and former Mayor Frank Letch MBE, who died on 8th April 2025, aged 80

Since the last edition we learned of the passing of our friend and colleague **Frank Letch** – known personally, or in his role as councillor and our long-serving mayor, by nearly all

Crediton residents. There is more about Frank in this issue – so I will leave you to your own thoughts and memories as you read it.

On a brighter note, following the May 1 elections we have a **new Devon County councillor**, Jim Cairney (representing the Liberal Democrat party). There will undoubtedly be changes coming our way, and we look forward to working with Jim to get the best for the Crediton

area once he's got into his new role. He will be providing us with monthly updates on news and actions that affect the town, businesses, residents and visitors, as both Mid Devon district councillor and Devon County councillor for Crediton.

In the coming months there are plenty of things happening locally or, at least, being actively discussed! The first update is that the council will be moving offices. We'll make sure that information is circulated in advance, but over the summer we will be moving - just a couple of doors down - to 6 North Street. The move will take place once some small internal building works have been undertaken.

The **Annual Meeting** of Crediton Town Council is on Tuesday 20 May. As with all Full Council meetings there will be the opportunity prior to the meeting to talk with councillors openly on topics of your choice. This will be held at Crediton Library and the first part of the meeting itself will be to determine the membership of committees and sub-committees, as well as the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair.

We hope there will be, as in early May and time of writing, lovely sunshine and decent temperatures when the Newcombes Meadow **Paddling Pool** is opened - around the late May Bank Holiday. As you may recall (see article KQ5) we are in discussions with MDCC



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over the funding of the pool and indeed its possible replacement, as well as provision of toilets nearby.

Transfer of assets. Tying in with this the town council has created a Working Party to consider assets currently owned by MDDC that, in the future, we might have transferred to the town council to own and manage. Discussions with MDDC have been taking place against the uncertain background of future local authority reform intended by national government. We may have to wait until the end of November for more information.



Parachute games at last year's Boniface Bash in Newcombes Meadow. Image courtesy CREDITON Town Council

For a second year the **Big Boniface Bash** will be held on Sunday 8 June in Newcombes Meadow – an event for all the family to come and enjoy. The feedback was very positive for the event last year and we are aiming to make the event even more enjoyable this year. And we will again be welcoming representatives from the town of

Dokkum in the Netherlands and the city of Fulda in central Germany.

On Thursday 17 June, 7pm, there is the **Annual Town Meeting**, a community event which will be on the Town Square. Please do come along: it is 'your' meeting really so there is even more reason to come than usual. Should you have something you want to add to the agenda for this meeting, please get in touch with the Town Clerk.



Pickle-making demo in Food Festival marquee

Moving into July there is the CREDITON Food Festival on the Town Square on Saturday 12th, now run by the town council. It will build on previous events, but with even more variety and even more traders' stalls. A drop-in Foodie Forum was held at the end of February at CREDITON Library: thank you to all those who attended and contributed ideas.

Ideas for the future of land to the south of Barnfield has been discussed, most recently at a **Community Conversation** at the Boniface Centre. Ideas were generated and thoughts shared: there

was lots of feedback, with comments collated to be shared in an easy-to-read format. More conversations and meetings will be required over the coming years to shape a positive future for as many people as possible, but recognising too that there will inevitably be compromises!

If you are not able to attend any of the upcoming Full Council meetings or the Annual Town Meeting, you can always contact the office, or indeed any councillor – contact details available in our regular newsletters and on the crediton.gov.uk website, where responses to public questions are also added regularly.

Cllr Steve Huxtable, Deputy chair

Crediton Heart Project wants theatre for Crediton

The Crediton Heart Project, an independent group interested in improving the Crediton's cultural environment, gave an interesting presentation to the full town council in April.

Heart Project chair Rosemary Stephenson (former Crediton Arts Centre administrator) revealed their proposal to build a 220-seat multi-use building (for theatre, cinema, dance and musical performances) on the site of the present Union Road toilet block and incorporating the disused reservoir space beneath.



For re-development? Toilet block on Union Road to become 220-seat theatre?

The Park House, as the drama and community café space may be named, will address the lack of purpose-built performance space in Crediton. Organisations such as CODS, Crediton Youth Theatre and Turning Tides were fully behind the project, which would work in partnership with the current Arts Centre.

Stephenson and Heart Project colleague Kate Lock conceded that there would not be any visitor parking on the site: audiences would come on foot or use existing car parks at the parish church or at St Saviours. A member of the public asked if the future residents at Libbets Grange or the expected new developments beyond Barnfield would be expected to walk there and back. Yes, they said.

Was this the ideal site? Why didn't the Heart Project instead discuss

working with QE Academy to create a theatre space serving both school and community? QE Principal Paula Smith had been invited to join consultations, was the response. A green-field site next to Redlands NHS practice (off Joseph Locke Way) had been the group's first proposed location but the doctors, who own the area, had not been co-operative.

King to be hung – but not yet

The long-running saga of the King's portrait is not over! Bowing to additional public comments, the town council, having initially declined to order the photograph of the monarch, offered by HM Government free to all government departments, agencies and councils, confirmed that it has now requested and received the official framed photo portrait.

Asked at a recent meeting why the picture of King Charles had not yet been hung, Liz Brookes-Hocking (Chair of the Community committee) responded that the council would be relocating to new premises before long and that it didn't wish to damage the walls of the present rented property.



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Town council by-election

The Congregational Church was hired for a polling station by Mid Devon Electoral Services to administer a town council by-election in Lawrence ward (roughly the western half of the town) on 27th March.

Members of the public might wonder why an election should take place to contest a single seat in just one ward of a parish council, but the tussle was between the local Liberal Democrat party seeking to maintain control of Crediton Town Council and the Independents for Crediton group which aims to displace all party politics from the town council.

When there is a vacant seat mid-term on the town council councillors are permitted by election rules to co-opt (ie: appoint) a member of the public to fill the vacancy. However a by-election will take place if a request is made to the local authority by 10 or more residents. If Mid Devon district council receives nominations from two or more candidates a public vote (poll) takes place.

By-election result: Vix Frisby (Independent) 308; Tim Stanford (Lib Dem) 268. Voter turnout was 18.7% - almost the same as the turnout for similar town council by-elections in 2019. Registered electors in the Lawrence ward totalled 3094.

At the time of publication there is a further town councillor vacancy, following the death of Cllr Frank Letch. Currently the Liberal Democrats hold 5

seats, while the remaining 6 are held by independent members.

Devon County Council elections

Elections for the 58 divisions of Devon County Council took place (along with similar elections nationwide) on Thursday 1st May. During the weeks leading up to the event political parties could be seen canvassing for support on the High Street and at the edge of the farmers market (held on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month).

Crediton, like most other divisions, is represented by a single county councillor. Comprising 10,666 registered electors, the division includes not just the population of Crediton itself but embraces parishes, villages and hamlets mostly to the west and south-west including Bow, Colebrooke and Coleford, Copplestone, Crediton Hamlets, Hittisleigh, Venny Tedburn, Yeoford - and as far away as Cheriton Bishop.

The seat had been held by the late Frank Letch (who announced he would stand down due to his illness) and endorsed fellow Lib Dem Cllr Jim Cairney instead. Thus all the candidates were standing for the seat for the first time. The turnout declined from last time: 33.2% compared with 39.4% at the previous county elections in 2021.

The votes cast were as follows:
Jim Cairney (Lib Dem Party) 1259
Charles Beazley (Reform UK) 869
Angus Howie (Conservative Party) 602
Paul Vincent (Labour Party) 423
Rob Rickey (Green Party) 333
Wesley Mitchell (Heritage Party) 52



A recent Crediton Courier issue, reporting on major disruption in Copplestone caused by The Cross pub building on the verge of collapse. Villagers on foot and vehicles on the nearby A377 were severely affected

Courier price up again

Purchasers of the Crediton Courier discovered in early April that our local newspaper had gone up in price. It now costs £2 per weekly issue - an increase of 50p on a recent earlier price rise. A typical print issue of the Courier weighs approx 50g – equivalent to £40 per kilo! The Courier is part of the national Tindle newspaper group. Last year it closed its Crediton office at 102 High Street.

Crediton Library news. Many local users of the library will be sad to learn that Library Supervisor Sue Lee is to retire soon, after 8 years managing

Crediton's library. Her patience and calm supervision will be greatly missed. Friends of Crediton Library, staff members (and KQ) send all best wishes for her retirement. We learn with some concern that there is no intention to replace her post.

Library's Summer Book Quest.

The Library will offer a new reading initiative for children over the summer holidays. Tailored to Devon communities, Devon author Dan Metcalf has written a great storyline on a Deep Sea Adventure theme, including a message to clean up oceans and protect the environment.

Children will be challenged to do three things: visit the library as many times as they like, read the stories they love, and complete one or more activities - which include drawing an underwater creature, telling library staff a fun-fact, going rock-pooling, attending a library event or doing a litter-pick.

Photocopies double in price.

Meanwhile Libraries Unlimited, the charity that runs Devon's libraries, has raised the price of photocopying. An A4 black & white copy now costs 20p at Crediton Library. Devon's libraries receive a grant from Devon County Council to provide a comprehensive service, but are having to manage on reduced support from the county. Crediton Library has had to cancel some newspaper subscriptions but continues to have the *i* daily. There are also numerous periodicals that library members can access on-line at no cost.

... but free food at **Library's Food**

Larder. The use of the library as a Food Larder for surplus comestibles from supermarkets continues to thrive. Bread, vegetables and refrigerated items may be collected by anyone at no cost during the library's opening hours. The initiative is intended to reduce the amount of food thrown away - as compared with a foodbank, which has the aim of alleviating poverty.

New openings on the High Street

The premises formerly occupied by BetFred is shortly to become a clinic, *Osteo Physio*. Partners in the Crediton outlet, which is a locally-based franchise, Sabrina and Michal Atwill are looking forward to opening at no. 35 High Street in early June.

Sabrina writes: "[The] family-run clinic is led by a team of experienced and highly qualified therapists who provide a range of treatments aimed at relieving pain, supporting recovery, and improving mobility and wellbeing ... Whether you're recovering from an injury, managing chronic discomfort, or simply looking to move better and feel healthier, we're here to help you every step of the way."

Meanwhile, new business *The Fuel Hub* concerned with well-being and nutrition is shortly to open at 124 High Street - its window at the time of writing offering to customers' a 'free wellness evaluation'.

At the other end of the nutrition spectrum *QuickVapes4U* looks soon to open at 116 High Street for vaping supplies, including 'e-liquids, short-fill juices and pre-filled pods' – all products presumably for those with an urge for

nicotine - over-18s only. (The Lamo Market outlet, offering vapes, tobacco and confectionery, seems now to have its metal shutters permanently down.)

A second nail bar *Crediton Nails* has opened at 49 High Street.

Excitement is whirling round in advance of a new laundrette for the town, an idea which many people have greeted with enthusiasm. Planning permission was granted for a change of use at 8 High Street (previously occupied by the Co-Co's café, now moved to larger premises).

The Technology Shop has returned to the High Street (after a spell of doing repairs and servicing by appointment only on Union Road). For all your computer servicing, repairs and upgrades.

And not to forget *Twinkle Little Tarr* at no. 5 High Street, a cake-making business that opened a few months back, including cakes to order and 'cake decorating parties'.

Locally-based artist Karen Gutans has opened a gallery for her own work and (currently) 14 other artists and craftspeople at the Creedy Centre at The Creedy Centre. Karen also features an 'Artist of the Month.'

McDonalds and Lidl open after delays

Lidl, a German-owned discount supermarket, opened its Crediton outlet on 20th March after postponement due to a planning error.

The store is built on a part of the playing fields, known once as The Rec, and



Gregory tanker exits Church Lane after unloading milk at Crediton Dairy

KIRTON QUARTERLY NOTES

Please send items for publication (e-mails preferred) by 15 June for the Autumn 2025 issue.

If you would like to be involved in the magazine's content, production, advertising or distribution, contact pveclipse@btinternet.com

edited by Paul Vincent

published by Friends of Crediton Library

Information is published in good faith but KQ does not accept responsibility for its accuracy. Opinions expressed are those of individual contributors.

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Latest date for artwork for Summer issue is 20th July (magazine covering period mid-Aug – end of Nov)



*Spotted at McDonald's: half-eaten burger,
fries & milkshake*

Situated at the eastern end of the town next to Mole Avon, it is a 24-hour operation with a drive-through ordering and pick-up arrangement so that customers can enjoy the full calory load of its burger buns and milk-shakes without having to burn off any energy in the process. It also has a 76-seat restaurant and promised 90 full- and part-time jobs. Being easily accessible off the A377, the store is proving popular with commuters and commercial travellers. It is also attractive to kids after school is over.

Support High Street food shops!

Despite the thousands of square metres of produce in our three supermarkets, there are still some delicious items that they don't offer shoppers. For instance some delicious local cheeses and home-made pâté can be obtained from Kitchen@No. 25, fine smoked streaky bacon from Cox's butchers, good bread and pastries from either of our independent bakeries, and – come mid-July – greengages from Four Seasons! Cook slowly with sugar and serve with cream.



*Greengages will be on sale at Four Seasons.
(Photo taken last summer)*

owned by Queen Elizabeth's Education Foundation. Lidl paid £800,000 for the site. There are 114 parking spaces, 2 electric vehicle charging points and 12 bicycle parking spaces. Around 40 new jobs have been created by the new store. Planning conditions included a payment of £87,289 to assist with the flow of traffic through the 'Western Gateway', St Lawrence Green and the High Street 'to address air quality within the Crediton Air Quality Management Area'. Lidl paid £400,000 to help relocate Crediton Rugby Club. Lidl has just over 1,000 stores in the UK. Among its unique (or unique-ish) features is that the chain does not play mood music in its stores and does not sell tobacco or nicotine-related products.

McDonalds has getting on for 1500 outlets in the UK, out of around 40,000 worldwide. The US-owned fast-food business opened its Crediton outlet on 26th February.

continued on p28

Crediton Bowling Club



An afternoon bowling fixture in progress at Newcombes Meadow

For a devoted section of Crediton society the approach of summer means one thing: time to get the 'whites' out and get the bowling shoes on. The troubles of the world may be put aside, intermittently at least, in favour of the quintessential English sport of Lawn Bowls.

Established in 1931, Crediton Bowling Club in Newcombes Meadow has become a highly respected member of Devon's competitive bowling community. Our local bowling club is admired for its beautifully kept Green, and its 90-strong membership includes national champions, and supplies players for county as well as English national teams, both ladies' and men's.

But don't let that high reputation put you off starting! The club offers opportunities for people of all abilities, including those who have never picked up a bowl before. As club members are keen to assert, gone are the days of it being an old person's game: people of all ages are welcome.

The club has a range of Bowls England-trained coaches who can provide high level coaching at an individual or group level, and the club has a special Saturday morning training session for young children.

The sport seems simple enough. Played on a Green, a closely-mown square of grass, the aim of the game is for your own, or your team's, bowls to be rolled closest to the small white ball known as 'the jack'.

The game takes place within a lane on the bowling green known as a 'rink'. Players start on a mat at one end and roll the jack 120 feet or so away - don't mention metric distances here! Each player takes a turn to roll each of their 4 bowls down the Green, with the aim of getting closest to the jack - or knocking their opponent(s) further away from it.

Once all the bowls have been thrown the team will analyse the 'head' of bowls and will agree which team has got their bowl or bowls closest to the jack. The closest bowls to the jack win.

It's jolly tricky in practice. Two things make the challenge harder and consequently more fun, exciting and/or frustrating.

1) The bowl you roll, known also as a 'wood' - isn't actually spherical: while it can roll smoothly down the green, one side of the wood is slightly more rounded than on the other, which means that as the bowl starts to lose pace it curves to one side or the other according to its 'bias'. Players will choose to bowl to either side of the growing cluster of bowls, curving their own efforts in behind those of others to get close to the jack, while possibly trying to knock the opposition's bowls further away.

2) There are one or more opposition players taking it in turns to thwart your efforts.

Prior to an event the grounds-person sets up the Green with a number of parallel rinks on which each competition (consisting of several 'ends') will take place. The rinks may run north-south or east-west and be moved (like a cricket wicket) to ensure even use of the surface.

Games may be arranged between singles, pairs, triples or a full rink of four persons in a team. Participants bring their own set of bowls, identifiable to the individual and of a size suited to their hand.

Crediton Bowling Club takes its competitions seriously and many matches take place during the season. From roughly Easter to the end of September the Club enters teams in national and county events, men's Over 60's leagues, ladies' leagues, the Exeter Thursday evening mixed leagues, and there are fifty or more 'friendlies,' home and away, against clubs in a roughly 35-mile radius of Exeter. Add to this there are relaxed Friday evening member sessions.

To the passer-by, bowling is a serene and unhurried activity, played by nicely turned-out men and women, often with strong local affiliations, wearing white kit, regulation footwear and a variety of head-gear to keep the sun off.

The casual spectator need have no idea of how the game is progressing to enjoy the scene, soothed by the hum of conversation on a sunny afternoon or early evening, the session

peppered with the clink of bowls colliding, calls of advice or praise for a finely bowled wood, and the sound of gentle clapping at the end of an end. One can't help but be impressed by an activity so pleasingly removed from the tiresome concerns of everyday life.



Refreshments in the clubhouse await players during the half-time break

As it happens many of the club's activities take place in the 'off-season' when there is no outdoor bowling, and when the clubhouse is the venue for charity and social events. There are Friday social evenings - cards, bingo, talks, 'horse racing', quizzes, skittles. At other times the venue is simply a friendly place for members to meet for refreshments. The club can also be hired privately by other organisations.

Crediton Bowling Club is a venue for the local skittles league, the skittles 'alley' being a stretch of wooden floor running most of the length of the clubhouse (but neatly covered with matching carpet tiles after its winter season).

As every sporting and social organisation knows well, there are many background roles – all voluntary and unpaid - without which nothing would happen at all. Vital to sporting

success is grounds maintenance and coaching, but the club's well-being depends too on its membership secretary and treasurer, President and Captain, those running the bar, organising social events, re-decorating the clubhouse, and much else. Those skilled in the arts of tea-brewing and cake-making are arguably the most important of all!

The club is already thinking about its upcoming 100th anniversary in 2031. Before then, it intends to raise funds to upgrade the clubhouse with a better heating system, replacement windows and a new kitchen. Offers of financial support will be welcome!

Intrigued? Now try it out for yourself!

A nationally sponsored *Bowls Big Weekend* event takes place on Sunday 25th May 10.30am -2pm at Newcombes Meadow. While this is a free fun opportunity for anyone to come and have a go, the event doubles as an opportunity for clubs to recruit new members. Contact Sue Hendy: creditonfixturesbc@gmail.com

Are you a trading business - or in fact any organisation in the town? Over a fortnight (4th -16th August) is the annual Crediton Rotary Club-organised Industrial Bowls competition. Teams of 4 are welcome to take part (previous experience not essential). A small entry fee is payable for this knock-out contest. Contact Paul Radnor (Rotary Club) on 01363 773002.

Membership of Crediton Bowling Club is £100 per year (clothing, shoes, set of bowls extra) or £15 for Social Membership. £3 is the normal fee for each event played. For more information contact Maddy Tucker on 07792 139333, canning817@btinternet.com, or W: creditonbowlingclub.org.uk

PV (with thanks to Amy Bond for assistance with rules and technical terms)

Notes

Up on Lords Meadow industrial estate Crediton is fortunate to have the excellent Bond Bowls which supplies clothing and equipment for all forms of bowls sports – and where founder Chris Bond and store manager Robert Paxton, having both represented England in international bowls competitions, can answer all your bowling enquiries.

Lawn Bowls should not be confused with Short Mat Bowling, which is an indoor game played on long green mats rolled out in the winter months, or indeed Carpet Bowls, a further reduced version mainly for home or institutional use. (Crediton u3a runs a monthly Carpet Bowls session.) There is also a dastardly outdoor variant called Crown Bowls, in which the playing surface itself is not entirely flat and may have an intentionally convex profile.

St Lawrence Chapel: 'Ancient & (Relatively) Modern'

Presentation by Tony Gale, Tues 29th April, St Lawrence Chapel, Threshers



St Lawrence Chapel, off Threshers:— the present chapel dates from 1921 but re-used stone from earlier buildings on the site

In the picture opposite St Lawrence Chapel looks like a much bigger place and possibly hundreds of years old. In fact it is a modest building, hidden away on Threshers (close to Old Landscore School) and the present structure dates from the 1920s.

But, as local historian Tony Gale (Crediton Area Museum & History Society) expounded in a delightful presentation, the chapel is supported by 800 years of history, dating back to a first early record in 1242. There were in medieval times in Crediton an annual St Lawrence Fair in August which associated the western part of the town with the ancient Catholic saint.

Way back in the 13thC the early St Lawrence building belonged to Crediton's collegiate church (a much

more powerful ecclesiastical institution than now). It was founded as a *recluserium* – a haven for travelling Benedictine friars (religious men who dedicated themselves to supporting poorer members of society).

Over time it served a number of functions, but records are few, and facts obscure. While in medieval times it may have functioned as a place of worship, it may have been also used as a hostel, a home for those suffering from leprosy, or for a hermit's seclusion.

Following the dissolution of church organisations in the 16thC it fell into private hands, becoming part of the Manor of Crediton St Lawrence, an estate of 240 acres created on the western side of the town. (Two familiar names, Landscore and Chapel Downs, which appear on an old map, link to that early estate - Landscore being derived from an old word for 'boundary,' while Chapel Downs indicates the extent of the St Lawrence estate to the west of the town).

In 1559 the Crediton benefice (organisation, buildings and lands belonging to the parish church) was gifted the income from the estate by Queen Elizabeth I to support the church vicar and its grammar school master.

By the 17thC St Lawrence had ceased to have any church-related function. Sometime in the 18thC, abandoned and crumbling, it was rebuilt as three small residential dwellings. Visiting Victorian antiquarians found it hard to detect any remaining sacred character.

The idea for the present building was conceived in 1914 when the building was purchased by a Mrs Ellen Drake. In memory of her late husband she commissioned architect Sir Charles Nicholson to restore the building - as a chapel, in a style reminiscent of medieval form and using traditional materials. Hence the tall lancet windows at either end of the building, and stonework using the distinctive volcanic 'trap' originally quarried at Posbury (of which the parish church is partly constructed).

St Lawrence Chapel remains today as a consecrated building and part of the Benefice of Crediton (ie: under the auspices of Holy Cross parish church) where religious services are conducted monthly, and there are occasional social events.

Some (older) members of the audience recalled visits from when they were pupils of QE School. One mentioned a footpath leading to an entrance they called the 'Narnia door' – what were they anticipating on the other side?

Notes

A History of St. Lawrence Chapel & Hospital, Crediton, 1242 – 1921 by Tony Gale is available from Crediton Museum.

And St Lawrence himself? He was put to death in the 3rdC AD by a Roman emperor for his Christian belief. He is the patron saint of, among other things, schoolchildren and the poor.



Evening sun streams into St Lawrence Chapel as Tony Gale addresses the audience

DOG 'U' LIKE



Barney, Pug-Pom, 3 years old



Crediton's most cherished and characterful canines

Daiv (left), 2 years old, and Ziggi, 12 years old – both Springer Spaniels crossed with other breeds

OBITUARY - FRANK LETCH (1944-2025)

The death was announced on 8th April of Frank Letch, well-known to many of us in Crediton as politician and long-serving former Mayor. He was also a devoted husband, father and grandfather – and much else.

Having settled in Crediton in the mid-1990s he served as a town councillor, and in more recent years as both district and county councillor too. Not long ago he was elected Chair of Mid Devon District Council. His political affiliation was with the Liberal Democrats.

He was an excellent Mayor for 13 consecutive years (2008-2021) attending countless official occasions, public events and the opening of many a local festival, performance or business opening. He made himself available to hear the views of local people, regularly attending Crediton's farmers market, wearing civic regalia with pride.

Frank was entitled to be proud of his achievements, having overcome what many would judge a severe physical disability, having been born – for reasons unknown - with no right arm and a left arm that ended at the elbow. He took a decision early on to abandon the various prosthetic devices that he had been provided with, their function being more for cosmetic appearance – which he considered unnecessary - as for practical assistance.

From an early age he trained his lower limbs to accomplish an astounding range of tasks. For those of us who encountered Frank, how many times were we astonished at witnessing him signing forms with his toes, using

scissors to cut a ceremonial ribbon, or even playing a tune on a piano. He was delighted to demonstrate to schoolchildren his expertise at peeling vegetables.

Born to working-class parents in the east end of London, Frank's education took him through 'special schools' for 11 years, including boarding school experience. A keenness to learn modern languages developed, augmented by overseas holidays where they were put to the test in making, and impressing, new friends.

His first encounter with Devon was around 1962 when his father moved to Cheriton Bishop to work in a subsidiary of the company he worked for. Wishing to study at university, and having failed to achieve high enough grades (due to a 'romantic whim') the determined Frank enrolled for an extra year's study at Hele School, then a grammar school in Exeter, where subsequent A grades gained him a place at the University of Birmingham to read French and Italian.

There followed teaching posts at schools in Birmingham. Often Frank found himself fighting initial scepticism from prospective employers – only to emerge as a greatly admired member of staff.

At a dance he met his second wife Helen and they married in 1973 - Frank had been married for five years some years before – and they moved to live in Bala, a small market town in Snowdonia, Wales where he was to be head of Modern Languages at a comprehensive school of 600 pupils. Welsh was added to his list of languages he learnt to speak fluently. Frank's lifestyle and successes attracted

the attention of a Welsh film company who made a film about him, which won an international documentary award.

Helen tragically died from cancer in 1990, leaving Frank to bring up five children as a single parent – an extraordinary challenge in his situation, working full-time and living in an isolated village. He learnt to drive, his car being adapted to his needs.

Advised by his doctor that he was 'doing too much' (!) he took early retirement and became involved in Reach (the Association for Children with Hand & Arm Deficiency), a charity with which he had a long involvement. As a result of his representing a child in applying for a higher Disability Living Allowance, Frank was invited to become a Disability Qualified panel member, which later led to work as a tribunal judge. He retired from this in 2014 at the age of 70.

Frank was a Kennel Club-certified dog trainer and well-known exhibitor, winning several prizes at Crufts shows.

After a short (and rather ill-fated) marriage and a move to Scotland, Frank needed to re-build his life and in 1997 decided to move to Devon. Choosing Crediton, he found his ideal home at Butt Parks with a garden and off-street parking, where the warmth of neighbours provided diversion and companionship. He became active in local life, including becoming a governor of both primary schools, joining the Rotary Club and Crediton Town Council.

It was on a holiday in Egypt in 2006 that he met Natalia, one of a Russian group on vacation from Moscow. Their friendship was rapid – and mostly conducted in French. She invited Frank to her home in Moscow (where Natalia had two children from an earlier marriage). After a second visit, Natalia came to England with Frank and they were married shortly after.

Their life together included many family activities and overseas holidays and, latterly, political life on local councils where both Frank and Natalia enjoyed the responsibilities of his mayoral role. For his work and commitment to the local community Frank was awarded an MBE in the New Year's honours list in 2015.

Frank published an autobiography privately in 2022, entitled *Just in Case*. Its purpose, he stated in the foreword, was for his family, all seven children and their partners, and nine grandchildren to "*have an insight as to who I was and am. I hope it might be a help to children of Reach and their families, to anyone with a physical difference or mental health challenge.*" He added, of his life story: "*There are no 'right answers', but just the experiences of someone who has had a challenging life.*"

His book, including much of the above account, is a candid and touching personal history recalled in intimate detail, full of anecdotes, loves – there's no shortage of romantic encounters – struggles and laughter, achievement and well-deserved recognition. A copy is available from Crediton Library.



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*A town with no name?
Crediton awaits new road-signs*

Crediton road signs gone

Who would want the two road-signs that were removed from the principal points along the A377 east and west of the town? The mystery has not been solved, but new signs have been ordered from Devon County Council.

Gruffalo author at Bookery

Best-selling children's author Julia Donaldson will be visiting The Bookery on Sunday 25th May to promote the launch of her new book *Gozzle*. She will be signing copies of this (and other books) for keen fans of her popular rhyming stories, which include *The Gruffalo*, *Room on the Broom* and *Stick Man*. The bookshop requires pre-booking - to deal with an anticipated high demand. Only books bought on the day from The Bookery will be signed! Families can have their photo taken too.

KQ can reveal the background to the story: "*When Bear finds a lost little egg outside of his cave, it's the start of a big adventure! Out hatches Gozzle, a cute and fuzzy gosling who thinks Bear must be her daddy, and that she should be able to climb, dig and eat honey just like him. Join Bear and Gozzle on an unforgettable journey through the seasons . . .*"



*Novelty cup-cakes at
Twinkle Little Tarr, 6
High Street (see New
Openings on the High
Street, p15)*

MONTAGE OF LOCAL FEATURES

Crediton Noticeboards

See p.33 for locations!



MONTAGE OF LOCAL FEATURES

More sites for notices and posters!

See p.33 for locations!



CREDITON SUMMER CALENDAR

Info for next issue required by 15th July (covering period c15 Aug to end of Nov)

EVENTS: CIVIC & COMMUNITY

Tues 20 May, 7.30pm
FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

(CTC) incl public discussions from 7pm. Election of Chair/ Mayor for 2025/26
Crediton Library

Wed 4 June, 10am - 12
POLLINATOR GROUP Working Party (Sus Cred).
Meet at Belle Parade

Sat 14 June, 10am - 12
[CUT!] at Jockey Hill
Community volunteers to clear weeds & debris (co-ordinated by CTC) - (also 12 July at Exeter Road; 9 Aug at War Memorial)

Sun 15 June, 2-5pm
Open Garden: 4 GOLDEN JOY (private house, in aid of Hospiscare) off Pounds Hill/ Longmeadows

Sat 12 July
CREDITON FOOD FESTIVAL (CTC) Town Square

Mon 18 Aug, 2-5pm
CREAM TEA (FoCL)
Crediton Library

Fridays until 27 June, 9.30am – 12.30
AWARD IN ENTERPRISE (advice for employability) (LearnDevon) CCC

1st & 3rd Sats 9.30-12.30
FARMERS MARKET
Town Square

4th Sat, 10am-12
REPAIR CAFÉ (Sus Cred)
Elephant (Note: the 4th Sat is not always the *last* Sat of the month!)

SOCIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Sun 25 May, 10am – 2
BOWLS BIG WEEKEND (Crediton Bowling Club)
Open to all, free
Newcombes Meadow

Sun 1 June, from 12.30
PICNIC IN THE PARK (CCC) Newcombes Meadow
bandstand

Sat 7 June, 6.30pm
DINNERTIME
Pop-up restaurant £37
Elephant [B]

Tuesdays 10.30am – 12
KNITWITS (knitting) group)
Library

1st Wed, 7pm
GAMES NIGHT
@100 Café, High St

3rd Thurs, 7pm
MOON JAZZ
3 Little Pigs

Fridays, 10.30am-12
CRAFT INN
(Sus Cred craft activities)
@100 Cafe

Fridays 12.30 – 2pm
SOUP & STORIES
The Bookery [B]

Last Fri of month
CIDER TASTING & PIZZA (Sandford Orchards) £35 [B]
Commonmarsh Lane, Lords Meadow Ind Est

PERFORMANCES/ EXHIBITIONS/TALKS/ FILMS/WORKSHOPS
Until Oct: Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 – 4pm; Sat 11 – 2pm
Exhibition: **THE HOME FRONT: CREDITON IN**

WORLD WAR II (CAHMS)
Crediton Museum, Old Town Hall

16 & 17 May, 7.30pm
Dance: **YUCCA DANCE: In The Round**
Arts Centre

Thurs 22 May, 7pm
Talk: **UNCOMMON GROUND**
Patrick Galbraith & Prof Richard Brazier (Univ of Exeter's Ctre for Resilience)
Bookery £4

Thurs 22 May, 7pm
Murder Mystery: **DEATH ON THE CREEDEY** (Flying Trunk Theatre) incl 3-course meal. £38

Thurs 22 – Tues 27 May, 10-4pm
SUMMER SHOW (locally based artists) Arts Ctre

Sun 25 May (booked time-slots only)
JULIA DONALDSON (author book-signing)
The Bookery [B]

Sun 25 May, 3pm
FIBONACCI QUARTET (SBCE) Parish Church £15 (students free)

Wed 28 May, 3.30pm
Afternoon author: **TODD GREY** The Bookery

Thurs 29 May, 7.30pm
Film: **RESERVOIR DOGS** (Last Thursday film club)
Arts Ctre

Sat 31 May, 7.30pm
FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (Mark Jardine one-man show) Arts Ctre £13

Thurs 5 June, 7pm
Author event: **EMMA STONEX** Bookery

Thurs 5 June, 7pm
JAZZ ON THE GREEN:
with **Roger Beaujolais**
(vibraphone): live jazz + Sri Lankan buffet £27
Arts Ctre [B]

Fri 6 June, 7.30pm
GOLDFINCHES
(indie-folk) Arts Ctre £12

Thurs 12 June, 7.30pm
**GERARD FLOTATS (cello),
JULIAN CHAN (piano)**
(SBCS) Parish Church £15
(students free)

Fri 13 June, 7.30pm
Film: **A HARD DAY'S
NIGHT** Arts Ctre £5

Fri 13 June, 7pm
Author event: **SOPHIE
PAVELL** Bookery

Fri 13 June, 7.30pm
Film: **A COMPLETE
UNKNOWN**
Arts Ctre £5

Wed 18 June, 10am
Talk: **THE LIFE OF
LEONARDO DE VINCI**
(u3a) Boniface Ctre £2

Thurs 19 June, 7pm (tbc)
COMEDY CABARET
(Flying Trunk Theatre)
Elephant

Thurs 19 June, 7.30pm
MOON JAZZ (local jazz
grouping, also at 3 Little
Pigs 3rd Thurs of month)
Arts Ctre £5

Thurs 27 June, 7.30pm
ROB BARRATT (comic poet,
singer) Arts Ctre £13

Sun 29 June, 3pm
THE PORTRAIT PLAYERS
(SBCS) incl. 'The New Lyre

– Songs by 17th Century
Italian Women' Parish
Church £15 (students free)

Thurs 3 July, 7pm
JAZZ ON THE GREEN:
with **Nicholas Meyer &
Pete Oxley**: live jazz + Sri
Lankan buffet Arts Ctre [B]

Fri 4 July, 7pm
Author event: **MERLIN
HANBURY-TENNISON**
(The Bookery) Held at CCC

Sun 13 July, 3pm
CORVUS CONSORT (vocal
ensemble) (SBCS) Parish
Church £15 (students free)

Fri 18 July, 7.30pm
A YEAR AND A DAY (actor
Christopher Sainton-Clark
performance) Arts Ctre £13

Fri 29 & Sat 30 Aug,
7.30pm; Sat 4pm
**THE SHADOWS OF
MONTARNASSE** (Crediton
Youth Theatre) [B]
Arts Ctre £5

Thurs 11 Sep, 7.30pm
**MANUS NOBLE: A Bard's
Tale** (classical guitar)
(SBCS) Parish church £15
(students free)

Tues weekly, 7.45pm
COMEDY WORKSHOP
Elephant

OUT OF TOWN
Thurs 15 May – Sat 17 May
DEVON COUNTY SHOW
Westpoint Arena, Clyst St
Mary

Sat 28 June, 7pm
Open Air Theatre: **FAR
FROM THE MADDING
CROWD** (Cygnet Theatre/
The Plough) Lapford Mill

Wed 9 July
Open Air Theatre: **A
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S**

DREAM (Sun & Moon/The
Plough) Lapford Mill

Sat 26 July
MID DEVON SHOW
Knightshayes, Chettiscombe,
Tiverton

Wed 6 Aug
NORTH DEVON SHOW
Umberleigh

Mon 18 Aug, 7pm
Open Air Theatre: **MUCH
ADO/MACBETH** (Four Forty
Theatre/The Plough)
Lapford Mill

Mon 25 August
**LUSTLEIGH
HORTICULTURAL SHOW**
nr. Moretonhampstead

QUICKE'S CHEESE TOURS
Various Fridays [B]
(ticket required)
Quicke's Farm, Newton St
Cyres

**ESPECIALLY FOR FAMILY/
CHILDREN**
Sun 13 July, 5pm
Open Air Theatre: **BIN RAT!**
(The Last Baguette/The
Plough)
Lapford Mill

REGULAR ENTERTAINMENT
1st Thurs, 6.30pm
JAZZ ON THE GREEN
(jazz/Sri Lankan buffet: £27
advance booking only) Arts
Centre [B]

3rd Thurs, 7.30pm
MOON JAZZ CLUB
(regular band, plus
jammers) 3 Little Pigs

1st & 3rd Fri, 7.30pm
CURIOUS CINEMA CLUB
(see venue for details)
Elephant

2nd Fri, 7pm
OPEN MIC NIGHT
Elephant

Last Fri, 7pm
OPEN MIC NIGHT
@100 Cafe

Last Sun, 7pm
OPEN MIC NIGHT
Red Deer

1st Sun, 6-9pm
TREV THE PIANOMAN
(Trevor Woodison, pianist)
Crediton Inn

REGULAR SOCIAL EVENTS
Tues 10-11.30am
TUESDAY DROP-IN
(coffee social)
Boniface Centre

Wed 10am-12
CAUSEWAY (coffee social,
esp for those with learning
disabilities, carers etc) CCC

Thurs 10-11.30am
COFFEE & COMPANY
(esp older residents) CCC

4th Fri, 6.30pm
BSL SOCIAL
(deaf/hard of hearing)
Elephant

Sat 10am
TOGETHER 4 COFFEE
Methodist Church

SPECTATOR SPORTS
CREDITON RUGBY CLUB
Exhibition Road

CREDITON UNITED AFC
(football) Lords Meadow pitch

SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES
Holy Cross Parish Church
9.30am Choral Evensong 1st
Sun, 6pm

Congregational Church
(CCC) 10.30am

Methodist Church
10.30am

St Boniface R.C. Church
9.30am

SCHOOL DATES
QE Academy
Summer term
Half term: Mon 26 May - Fri
30 May; Last day of term:
Fri 18 July
Autumn term
First days of term: Wed 3
Sept: Years 7, 9, 11, 13;
Thurs 4 Sept: Years 8, 10;
Mon 8 Sept: Year 12

Haywards Primary
Summer term
Half term: Mon 26 - Fri 30
May; Non-pupil day: Mon 2
June; Last day of term: Tues
22 July

Landscore Primary
Summer term
Half term: Mon 26 May -
Mon 2 June; Last day of
term: Wed 23 July

NB: This is not a
comprehensive listings
service. Readers are
recommended to sign up
to mailing lists or social
media pages for any/all
of the above venues and/
or organisations. See
also *Crediton Courier's*
Kirton Raiser events diary,
published Thurs weekly.

NB: booking may be required
for some events – please
check! Events include free
or drop-in events as well as
those with admission charge
or pre-payment/booking'

Abbreviations
[B] = booking required/
advised CAHMS = Crediton
Area History & Museum
Society; CCC = Crediton
Congregational Church;
CTC = Crediton Town
Council; CUFC = Crediton
United Football Club;
[CUT!] = Crediton Urban
Taskforce; CYT = Crediton
Youth Theatre; Elephant
= Elephant on the Green;
FoCL = Friends of Crediton

Library; SBCS = St Boniface
Concert Society; Sus Cred =
Sustainable Crediton

Useful websites
crediton.gov.uk/Your-
Council/Meetings
u3asites.org.uk/crediton/
home
thelploughartscentre.co.uk
creditonartscentre.org
creditoninandaround.co.uk



Noticeboards & Poster site locations

Page 29. Top row, left to
right: on wall by Adams,
High Street; outside (Market
Square, on former town
council offices (now Pippins
nursery); Union Road,
inside porch at Holy Cross
parish church. 2nd row:
Market Street, outside Post
Office; High Street, outside
The Ship Hotel (belongs to
Crediton United AFC);
Market St, wall on east
side. 3rd row: Union Road,
edge of churchyard; Searle
Street, outside Old Town
Hall (Crediton Museum);
East Street, outside Arts
Centre. Bottom row: St
Lawrence Green, outside
Elephant on the Green; High
Street, by bus-stop and
former Lloyds Bank.
Page 30. Top row, left to
right: North Street, front
of town council premises;
Market Square, wall of The
Green Shop; High Street,
door of A E Lee outfitters.
2nd row: High Street, inside
SPAR; North Street, window
of Sustainable Crediton
'hub'; High Street, window
of The Sandwich Shop; High
Street, window shelf of A J
Cox butchers; North Street,
window of The Barber Shop



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