

No. 9

Spring 2026

KIRTON quarterly

a magazine for the CREDITON community

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Town council's budget approaching £600K

50 years at Downes CREDITON Golf Club

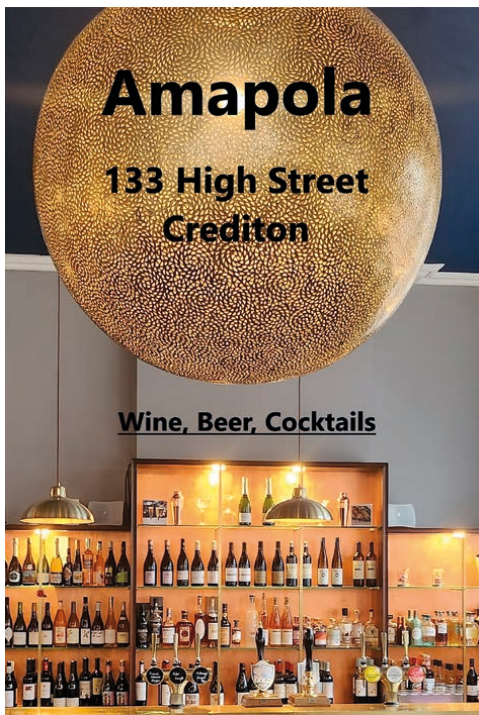
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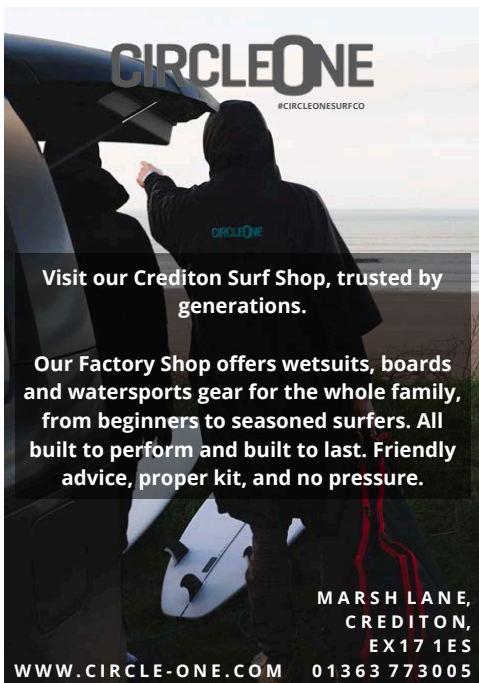
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Cover picture: Carving on the front of The Mount, Alexandra Road (former boys' boarding house for QE school)



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Sartorial roadkill and lost property

Sartorial is an odd word, meaning to do with clothing, while roadkill describes the fate of animals that have been hit by a vehicle and ended their lives as a consequence. Unsqueamish rural folk will happily salvage a freshly killed deer, rabbit or pheasant on the roadside and turn it into a delicious supper.

‘Sartorial roadkill’ adapts the concept (metaphorically) to our urban setting, where we witness not dead animals but lost articles of clothing and accessories. Dropped from bag or pocket or fallen from a car, it’s not unusual to notice a woollen hat, scarf or glove (usually just one) on the pavement or in the gutter, recently dropped or already soiled by mud and wet and sometimes squished by traffic. Things such as t-shirts, socks or even single shoes occasionally appear, prompting one to wonder how their wearers didn’t notice they’d gone.

Small garments and soft toys belonging to toddlers in a buggy will often be shed on the ground. Kind people often pick them up and place them on a nearby surface, hoping their owner’s parent or grandparent may be passing back the same way and will spot them. There is something poignant about seeing a single hand-knitted baby bootie on a windowsill.

But in the case of adult clothing, is it OK to rescue such items, take them home, give them a good wash and wear them yourself? Does it count as ‘finders keepers’ - or is it a form of theft?

We know their owners are unlikely to come to look for them, in which case they could just end up in a council refuse sack, but they could be in good condition and thus perfectly serviceable in the hands of someone new. On the other hand, a particularly distinctive item runs the risk of the original owner, seeing it on another body, mounting a challenge for its return.

The greatest quantity of abandoned clothing and accessories is located, of course, not on the roadside but on the coat-hooks and in the lost property lockers of every pub, café, church and indoor meeting place in town. Here customers and patrons have removed their rain-proof outer wear and warmer articles of clothing, parked their water-bottles under a chair, left their phone chargers in a wall-socket and departed without remembering what they had with them when they came in. (That’s where train travel is helpful: you can rely on a friendly announcement at terminal stations urging passengers to take all their personal possessions with them.)

Meanwhile Crediton’s hospitality venues put up with a growing stash of items for months on end until such time as they have no more space. Then a trip with a full bin-bag to charity shop or recycling centre becomes a necessity.

Might it be a good idea to have a single destination where people could look for the things they realise belatedly they have left behind (somewhere, but they can’t remember where) and where our long-suffering proprietors can take the stuff? Or bring back jumble sales!

One recent suggestion has been to turn the former BT phone box at St Lawrence Green into a repository for orphaned (single) gloves, dropped by the wayside. By mislaying a single glove, their owner has been left with a useless remaining one, which they cannot wear by itself. They will be surely delighted to have a place to go in the hope of retrieving its lost companion. (Other accessories/ hosiery items could perhaps be so accommodated.)

Crediton Town Council has voted to spend nearly £600,000 on local initiatives, projects, activities and events

Paul Vincent (resident and council tax payer)

In mid-January a majority of town councillors (currently 6 Liberal Democrats and 6 Independents) voted to approve a 5% increase in the town council's Precept for the financial year 2026/27. The above-inflation rise was opposed by 3 of the Independent members: Cllr Vix Frisby and Cllr Giles Fawssett said that the budget should not rise at all, and Cllr Rachel Backhouse had a number of reservations about how the budget was prepared. Cllr Guy Cochran, leader of the town council's Lib Dem group (both district and town councillor) described the increase as 'prudent'.

The town Precept is a separate portion of our annual council tax bill, by which a parish or town council may raise funds to spend within its local community. For this coming year the Precept has been set at £545,000 (with the town council topping up this revenue further from its reserves in order to set a total anticipated spend of £593,000). The money covers the funding and delivery of the town council's agreed agenda, ie: everything it is proposing to get done in the year ahead.

Council tax bills are sent out to local addresses in early spring with the Precept portion – the sum applied only to Crediton residents - apportioned among our 4,000 properties. The exact amount due from each household is calculated according to a set formula; individual bills varying according to the banding of each home, and some other factors. For instance, properties with a single adult occupant have their council bills reduced by 25%. (Why not a 50% discount? one might argue since all other paying households have at least twice the number of adults). Poorer households may be exempted altogether.

What Crediton Town Council decides to spend our money on . . . is almost entirely *at the discretion* of the council's elected members

How Crediton Town Council decides to spend its residents' money is almost entirely *at the discretion* of the council's elected members. While district and county councils are legally bound to deliver essential (statutory) services for their communities, a town or parish council has no statutory services to deliver. Its minimal obligations are to hold one public meeting per year and to look after community allotments.

However, over a decade and longer, Crediton Town Council's agenda has swelled, along with soaring administrative costs, and the Precept has risen steeply. The result is that Crediton council tax-payers are set by far the highest Precept of all parishes within the Mid Devon district. A typical (Band D) Crediton council tax-payer is about to receive a demand for nearly £193.

This is £10 more than last year. Since this seems only a small increase, and the town Precept is only a minor part of the whole council tax bill, and since most people's council tax is paid in monthly instalments, such a modest rise could go unnoticed among our many other financial concerns. Even if a resident wished to protest, contesting the bill would be fruitless: it is not legal to withhold payment. If the town council has acted in accordance with proper procedures, its democratically elected members are entitled to set the Precept as high as they wish – unchallenged.

[The council's] democratically elected members are entitled to set the Precept as high as they wish

It is remarkable that there is no upper limit to the amount residents may be obliged to pay. Perhaps this is because towns and rural parishes are considered to have few and/or very modest spending ambitions, and their council representatives deemed to be closely in tune with the wishes of local people.

But while in small rural parishes councillors are more likely to be neighbours and/or friends, in a town of several thousand residents few people are personally acquainted with their councillors and, given the low voter turnout at local elections, it is unlikely that they voted for them either. Town councillors, in their turn, may have become desensitised to the impact their spending decisions may have on their constituents' bank balances.

Council Tax Bill 2025/2026	
HOW THE TAX IS ARRIVED AT FOR BAND D	
Devon County Council	1801.26
Mid Devon District Council	239.12
Crediton	182.74
D & C Police Crime Comm	288.20
D & S Fire And Rescue	104.68
TOTAL:	£ 2616.00

A resident's council tax bill for last year, showing Crediton's Precept (for a Band D property). Bills for 2026/27 will soon be arriving through Crediton letterboxes

Over the years Crediton Town Council has opted to take on more and more spending commitments, accruing in the process not only physical property and a greater number of salaried staff but also a range of established events, activities and services which the community has come to expect to happen.

It is relatively easy for councillors to vote annually to renew funding for these, but less easy for them to interrogate their earlier choices and reverse previous budget commitments, should



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some appear poor value for money, or unexpectedly difficult to deliver. By contrast, if they want to approve more spending they can simply raise their hands at a meeting - to increase the Precept further.

So far so unremarkable, except to repeat that Crediton's Precept is now the highest set by any of the fifty parishes in Mid Devon. It has risen by more than inflation every year for a decade or more, by over 10% in some years. In 2015/16 the council raised £162,000: this year it's £545,000. In 2013 Band D council-tax payers paid just over £52: now it's £193.

Should councillors . . . consider whether residents wish to part with this kind of money for services which are non-essential?

Should councillors not pause to consider whether residents wish to part with this kind of money for services which are non-essential - and from which some residents may gain no benefit at all?

Just to compare . . . Mid Devon's parishes range from small hamlets that charge nothing at all, to the two other market towns of Cullompton (£148.41 last year) and Tiverton (£77.73 last year). Variations between neighbouring parishes can lead to some strange anomalies. For instance, most home-owners in (Crediton's) Tuckers Meadow will be charged £193, while those who live a few yards away at Westernlea – which happens to lie in Crediton Hamlets parish – will be paying about £20.



Some town councillors (with unidentified staff member) before a recent meeting at Crediton Library

So how will Crediton Town Council be spending £593K?

The biggest chunk by far is spent on the salaries of directly employed staff (48p in every £1). Adding the costs of employment, pensions, rent of offices, utility bills, subscriptions, service agreements and other office-related expenses, well over half of the council's total budget is allocated to bureaucracy – to oversee the spending of the funds that remain. The town council employs a full-time Town Clerk plus, in part-time positions, Deputy Clerk, Events & Town Centre Officer, Administrative Assistant, and a Youth Officer. In February the council was due to consider providing funds for the Town Clerk to study for an M.A. in Public Leadership. Another proposal has been to create a further post, a Communications Officer – on a (part-time) salary of £17,000. Do other members of staff not have communication skills built into their job descriptions?!

Well over half of the council's total budget is allocated to bureaucracy - to oversee the spending of the funds that remain



Crediton homes will soon be receiving their council tax bills for the coming year

The next biggest allocation is nearly £60K for grants to local organisations and projects. Sports, drama, music and arts clubs, societies, youth clubs, social groups and charities are encouraged to apply for funding for projects or, in some cases, core funding, ranging from a few hundred pounds up to a maximum of £3,000. A Grants Committee assesses the applications and recommends approval by the Full Council. These grants enable mostly unpaid volunteers to

deliver activities that are much appreciated by those taking part. Crediton is enriched by these varied activities, organised and delivered by very many community-minded people.

Another large sum is being spent fitting out new town council offices at 6 North Street. The town council has wanted a new home since Mid Devon District council a decade ago sold offices on Market Street (shared between district and town councils), and the town council declined to pay Mid Devon's asking price. The lease on 6 North Street is seen by councillors as a more satisfactory long-term solution than the rented Bungalow which staff previously occupied at 8A North Street. The move into Manor Office is taking longer than anticipated due to internal works being required to meet heritage standards, but one attraction of the new building (formerly occupied by solicitors Gilbert Stephens) is that the town council has an option to purchase. In the meantime the town council is using the Library for council meetings and to provide desk space for staff.

Of the remaining budget, funds are divided into different lines of anticipated expenditure. Council-organised events such as Christmas in Crediton – hanging lights up and down the High Street alone costs nearly £20K - and summer festivals (Big Boniface Bash and Crediton Food Festival) plus floral displays around the town centre will account for around £40K in all (not including staff).

There is a £12,000 contract with not-for-profit organisation Turning Tides to carry out general tidying-up duties on the Town Square and elsewhere, and to service a single toilet cubicle kept open daily at Union Road. (Or at least this was being carried out until the latest vandalism incident in early Feb). CCTV cameras in the town centre cost another £10,000, paid to a service contractor, the video footage being visible to Devon & Cornwall Police. There are numerous other regular payments made, usually to outside suppliers of services.

The town council's own Youth Service, a project championed by former mayor Liz Brookes-Hocking (not related to the busy Congregational Church-based youth club) has required considerable investment, partly for safe-guarding reasons. A number of hourly remunerated workers have been part of the undertaking. Not many young people have attended its weekly meetings but the council points to its outreach activity in schools. Running youth clubs is something Devon County Council used to do, but ours was closed a decade or more ago. Apart from the direct salary of the Youth Officer, around £6K will be spent on supporting youth activities.

The town council owns some land - Peoples Park and some pockets of space including residential play areas - which require maintenance. Some grass verges that belong to the county council are mown at the town council's expense. There are physical items such as the town clock on the Old Town Hall, some noticeboards, Christmas decorations, and the much-used (and occasionally abused) tables & benches on the Town Square. Latterly the council has been slow to repair or replace some of these, but overall costs in these areas might be another £30K a year.

There is income from allotments, at Barnfield, Exhibition Road and a few at the back of Newcombes Meadow, and the small rents received from holders of these 140 small plots probably cover the administration costs.



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There is growing concern about the lack of progress at Old Landscore School, acquired at nominal cost from Devon County Council several years ago, but which now stands empty awaiting the town council's commitment (or otherwise) to organise the major renovation it will need if it is to serve any useful function in future. Doing nothing with it is costing around £12K per year in basic overheads and insurance.

Councillors themselves require support to enable them to fulfil their roles successfully. Training courses, computers and professional consultations to inform decision-making are some of the costs. Add to this a number of civic functions. Every now and then the council commissions a report, survey or feasibility study on one topic or another, and it pays a retainer to a firm of solicitors to advise on minor legal queries. All this runs into the tens of thousands of pounds.

There is always the possibility of by-election costs – in the event of one or more councillors resigning or otherwise ending their term of office prematurely. A single town council by-election costs in the region of £4,000 including venue hire and staffing. A tidy sum is put aside for this too. A bigger sum may be needed when all 12 seats come up for re-election every 4 years – that's if there are enough candidates in each ward to generate a contest.

Then there is the matter of Reserves. The council actually has funds of around £700,000 tucked away in a long-term savings account, which could be used for a major capital project or some kind of emergency. However, the council also holds current cash reserves which can be drawn on for projects in the pipeline but not yet approved, or for expenditure over-runs. In the coming year the council intends to part-fund its budget by moving money out of these reserves.

The council's budget breakdown – see the town council's website – makes it difficult to decipher how much projects and activities truly cost. However, it's not hard to see how a series of votes by a show of hands at a council meeting can lead to escalating costs. The question for some must be, how on earth does one start to rein in this spending?



Alternatively, if you had £600K to spend on Crediton, how would you spend it?!

The maintenance of planted beds at St Lawrence Green is carried out by a volunteer group of nearby residents – with the cost of plants, shrubs and compost funded by Crediton Town Council



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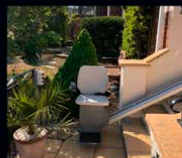
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QE school's time of reckoning approaches



College House at Western Road opened in 1859 as a boys' grammar school. Urgent works are soon to start to repair roof and other structural defects.

QE School has for several decades been an untidy amalgam of three formerly separate schools: the original boys' grammar school, the girls' high school next door (previously separated by a high fence, before merging in 1966) and the short-lived Secondary Modern school up at Barnfield, originally known as Shelley School. All were brought together in 1973 into a single Comprehensive institution but have remained inconveniently (and expensively) on the two sites, creating time-tabling challenges and commuting headaches for teachers going to and fro.

Aspirations to build a single-site new school (including on the site where Lidl supermarket now stands) have previously come to nothing, leaving the physical estate gradually decaying, with little new investment other than for some modular classrooms. A few years ago QE opted to become a single Academy school, and in 2021 it joined the expanding Ted Wragg Educational Trust which controls 18 schools and is based in Exeter.

The expectation is that the Ted Wragg Trust will soon resolve to relocate QE on to one of its existing sites. Although the Trust remains coy about a final decision, the consensus seems to favour Barnfield, where a whole new set of school buildings could be constructed on existing playing fields, and the old school buildings razed to the ground for artificial sports pitches

and the like, with land adjoining being requisitioned to provide for the larger number of pupils on site.

The major issue at Barnfield is about access for school buses, cars and those on foot. This may be solved in the next few years by an enlarged road link running west from Station Road (near Crediton railway station) - which will be required anyway for the several hundred houses that are to be built on land south of Barnfield. One imagines that the road must come first, to permit construction traffic for both school and housing estates. Otherwise pity the poor residents of Barnfield!

If this scenario is enacted, then the historic school buildings fronting Western Road could be repurposed. College House, originally the boys' grammar school dating from 1859, has already been vacated but this is because the buildings themselves are in a terrible condition, with urgent roof repairs needed and flooded cellars due to collapsed drainage and an underground stream running down from the hill above. The Ted Wragg Trust has committed £3-4 million to rectifying the problem – as they must with these Grade II listed buildings. The school's library, 6th form area and staff common room were relocated elsewhere several months ago.

In the longer term the Trust is considering how College House might be used jointly by both school and community. QE principal Paula Smith was quoted recently in *The Crediton Courier* describing its potential as a “*vibrant hub for learning, creativity and connection*” - whatever that might mean! A community consultation event was held in January at the Boniface Centre, inviting ideas and input from local people. Crediton Town Council was invited for separate talks. Perhaps there is an idea to divest the buildings out of the Ted Wragg portfolio altogether into the care of another organisation?

College House and the equally attractive West Wing (the former girls' high school building, dating from 1910) apart, the abandonment of the Western Road site for redevelopment would no doubt mean substantial demolition to remove existing school buildings, from the big 1960s block in the middle of the site to two gymnasia, an obsolete swimming pool and tennis courts. What eventually will come in its place? A fine new housing estate, one imagines.

The logistics of moving the whole school cohort to one site will create its own challenges. Will all pupils move to Western Road while Barnfield is reconstructed? Can they fit? Admission numbers have been falling in line with national demographics, but new homes and a growing local population may compensate. Current planned admission is for around 180 pupils per year group, so one way or another, with 5 year groups, that would total 900, plus a 6th form of around 70 in each year – another 140. But there are a lot of unknowns.

One concern is that QE's 6th form, arguably the best performing part of the school, could be forced to close due to declining numbers. If student numbers fall, this makes it difficult for the school to offer sufficient A level course choices – while a few miles away Exeter College welcomes all comers and offers many more options. Further out west Okehampton College

recently announced its own 6th form provision will be coming to an end soon due to falling enrolment. QE keenly emphasises that the school very much wants to retain its 6th form.

However, at least the school doesn't have to worry about residential students any longer. Its boarding provision (unusual for a state school) ceased in 2019. The two boarding houses St Martins and The Mount have lain empty for several years now, the latter now up for sale.



The Mount on Alexandra Road: a new buyer will enjoy the benefits of its 11-bedrooms

The Mount went on the open market just before Christmas and is marketed by estate agent Helmores. Situated on the north side of Alexandra Road just off the top of St Martins Lane, it's not often that a residential property in Cridton is offered for £1 million. Apart from having 11 bedrooms, it sits within an acre of land, with possible scope for additional new homes.

NOTE

Due to the movement of contractors and equipment, access to the car parking spaces at College House has been suspended, disappointing local residents who have enjoyed parking here overnight, at weekends and during holidays. The school advises that the turning circle below needs to be kept clear at all times – please!

However, a QE spokesperson informs Kirton Quarterly that local residents are welcome to park (outside school hours, and at their own risk) in the Quad Car Park, accessed off St Martin's Lane opposite Churchill Drive. She adds: "We are aware that parking is at a premium at this end of town, so want to do what we can to help!"

FOCUS ON COMMUNITY GROUPS

Downes Crediton Golf Club: our course celebrates 50 years!

Mike Palmer reports

This year Downes Golf Club celebrates the opening of the present golf course 50 years ago. The highlight of 2026 will be the big Anniversary Weekend of 14-17th June.

On 13th June 1976 a large crowd witnessed BBC TV Nationwide presenter Michael Barrett formally opening the club, an event which was followed by an exhibition golf match featuring professional golfers Neil Coles and Tommy Horton, former members of the Ryder Cup European team.

The opening of a new golf course in Crediton had taken several years of planning. It started in 1972 when just a few enthusiasts stood just below what is now the first tee, gazing at



Away from the cares of the world? Games of golf in progress at Downes club

wooded slopes and level meadows crossed by a trout stream. Two dilapidated cottages, they imagined, could be transformed into a clubhouse. A long lease with the Downes Estate owner, Captain M F Buller was agreed.

There had been an earlier 9-hole golf course, opened in 1923, its location following the river Creedy from Uton and Salmon Hutch to about a mile from Fordton. But it closed shortly after the 2nd World War through lack of funds.



The presentation of a major club trophy, the Buller Bowl, in 1926. The same trophy is awarded today – 100 years later

£60,000 was raised with help from South West Sports Council, Devon County Council and the then Urban and Rural District Councils. It was a long journey with plenty of challenges, including much work on the design of the course and the conversion of the cottages.

Since then there have been many improvements, among them the excavation and installation of the lake beside the 18th green, and a re-routing of the course to avoid an infamous feature known as ‘Cardiac Hill’ – a change appreciated by many older members!

In 1998 the Clubhouse had a major upgrade with funding from the National Lottery. A new dining area was created, along with ladies’ changing rooms and office accommodation. A recent addition is the Swing Studio. This is used for those working on their technical skills, and to simulate playing golf on other courses. Fancy playing at St Andrews, the home of golf? No problem! Other famous courses are available.

There are, at Downes club, over 700 members ranging from primary school age to nonagenarians. Golf is a game for everybody! Some thrive on a competitive challenge while others just hone their individual skills while enjoying a pleasant outdoor walk.

The basics of golf are straightforward enough. One of the very satisfying skills is driving the ball a good distance, hopefully straight, down a green and pleasant fairway. This is followed by the task of getting the ball to the green, where there follows the task of getting the ball in the little hole . . . putting! Along the way players negotiate ‘the rough’, a variety of trees, rivers, ponds, lakes - and bunkers. However frustrating it can be, the pleasure is greater, and people come back for more and more.



A notable characteristic of golf is that the near-beginner can contest against an experienced player using the handicap system. The experienced player will have a low handicap, and the less experienced one a higher handicap. The final result of the game is decided after the handicaps have been deducted from each player’s score.

Club coaches Joe Jordan and Oliver Greenslade in front of the Swing Studio where players can improve their skills - and play a (simulated) round of golf at famous other courses

Probably the best way to start playing golf is to have some lessons with one of the club's professional players. Downes is lucky to have two, Joe and Ollie, who offer lessons during the week. Thinking of giving it a try? Please contact the Club. And we have good news for you because golf is free from January to March for those wishing to try the game, and our course. When April comes you can decide whether to continue as a member of the club, when a subscription will be payable.

Downes Golf Club is a members' club (not a private business) so surplus funds are re-invested in the club to share with our members, friends and the local community. We welcome visitors to the club to play golf, or to pop in for a cup of afternoon tea, a drink with a friend or a sit-down meal. You do not have to be a member to enjoy these facilities.

Downes is open to all. Walkers along the footpaths through our picturesque scenery often take the time for some refreshment. The club-house is also open for community uses, with numerous organisations using the venue for meetings and gatherings.

As part of the Downes estate, Crediton Golf Club is home to plenty of wildlife. The River Yeo meanders through the course. Otters, kingfishers and dippers have all been spotted on its banks. A heron visits the course from time to time, enjoying the big lake. Canada geese fledge their chicks by the ponds, and swans grace us with their presence. Sometimes deer may be seen in the wooded areas, casually strolling through the course.

Meanwhile winter competitions continue, until the new Golf year begins in April with a ceremony to commemorate the outgoing club Captain handing over to the new one. The new season then progresses with many matches, competitions and social golf. The course is very busy and there are at least six regular competitions each week. Friendly matches take place against other clubs, as well as long standing inter-club competitions. There are also Society days, when other organisations are invited to come and enjoy a day's golf, often to raise funds for good causes.

To contact the club just phone 01363 773025. We will be delighted to receive your call!



The final hole: players teeing off at the 18th green towards the clubhouse

Join us for a relaxed and delicious **Sunday Roast** at Downes Crediton Golf Club, served every Sunday from 12 pm – 4 pm

Downes Crediton Golf Club, Hookway EX17 3PT

MAIN COURSE OPTIONS:

Choose from local **Roast Chicken**, grass-fed **Beef** or a **Mushroom, Cranberry & Brie Wellington** (V)

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Ask for our selection of desserts on the day

Bring your family and friends and enjoy a comforting Sunday meal with us. Book your table by phoning **01363 773025** or email golf@downescreditongc.co.uk



Main Course only £14.95 per person **BOOK NOW!**
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TRUCKS 'R' US!



Lapford-based Rose Removals van in dappled shade on Town Square

CREDITON ON THE CUTTING EDGE!

Robotic lawn-mowers have arrived

Fancy your own Norbot to do the work? If you missed the Wallace & Gromit stop-motion animation (aired on TV at Christmas this year and last) you may not recognise the name of Wallace's robot gnome, who performs all garden tasks in a benign way - until malevolently re-programmed, when things take a turn for the worse.

Up at Andrew Symons Ltd. deep in Lords Meadow Industrial Estate, they have some eye-catching machinery, guaranteed not to get out of control. Next to ride-on lawn-mowers, traditional push-along models and hand-held trimmers (and some impressive tractors outside) are the latest in garden technology: robotic lawnmowers.

The designers must have had a field-day thinking about these products. They borrow their looks - and behaviour - from racing cars, drones, hovercraft, even pet tortoises. One of them looks like a vehicle that could attempt

a land-speed record. Another (illustrated here) is more rugged-looking: part military, part Formula 1 racer?

Comparisons with Wallace's gnome Norbot are striking. Your new robotic mower can take orders from you (via smartphone or Alexa) and its accompanying app enables you to monitor its intentions and modify its behaviour. But it also has a mind of its own, or as good as . . .

These are what we used to call a labour-saving device – or a convenient solution when you just can't find a reliable grounds-person for your lawn . . . The machine will cut the grass while you're busy doing something else – or nothing much else. In the enticing brochure's photographs, that means lounging by the side of your swimming pool or holding a lunch party in the conservatory. Obviously these things are not for everyone!

But, should you come to acquire one, you will enjoy discussing your robot mower's uncanny self-awareness – of its geo-positioning, its energy consumption, even its foretelling the weather. Your machine is programmed to set off to mow at regular intervals but, like a responsible gardener, it will postpone its work if it's raining, or will put in an extra stint if the weather is warm and the grass is growing faster.

What about charging up its battery? When it's done mowing, it simply returns to its charging station and plugs itself back in. If it's running low on power it knows to head back to recharge, and then seek out the same bit of lawn where it left off earlier. You want stripes on your lawn? Stripes can be arranged.



Ready for the off – Husqvarna racer (sorry, lawn-mower)

When set up, the creature will not stray beyond the lawn itself, being guided by Satnav or alerted by a wire circuit around the perimeter. What if my garden's on a slope? Depending on the model, it can slave away on even a 50-degree incline.

Ah, but it's not going to pick up the grass, is it? Well, apparently the grass is reduced to such small particles by its team of spinning blades that the trimmings swiftly return to the earth in the form of 'micro-mulch'.

How about if your dog wants to play with it? Will it chop off its paws? Certainly not. Its blades know to cut out if raised from the ground.

These intelligent machines seem designed exclusively for private use, but could they be adapted for public parks too? Will one day robots be a common sight at People's Park or Newcombes Meadow and earning their keep around our playing fields?

Technology correspondent

CAT 'U' LIKE



One of Crediton's most cherished and characterful felines

Stormzy, boy kitten (one of twins) resident at The Duke of York public house

Weaving tales of witchcraft

textile artist & medieval historian Anne Jackson

at the Boniface Centre, Mon 12th January

Judith Casey reports



Woven panel by Anne Jackson, illustrating the hanging of 'witches' at Chelmsford, Essex

What better way to spend a dark January evening than to listen to a talk on witchcraft? Organised by Crediton Area History & Museum Society, Sandford-based Anne Jackson's illustrated talk combined interests in medieval history - particularly the fate of women involved in witchcraft - with textile design.

Originally from New York, Anne studied medieval history at St Andrew's University, followed by study in London for a post-graduate certificate in textile design. A committed feminist, Anne explores the power of 'the witch' in our culture, as a metaphor for our fears and as a representation of social injustice towards women. The term 'witch hunt' is still regularly used today.

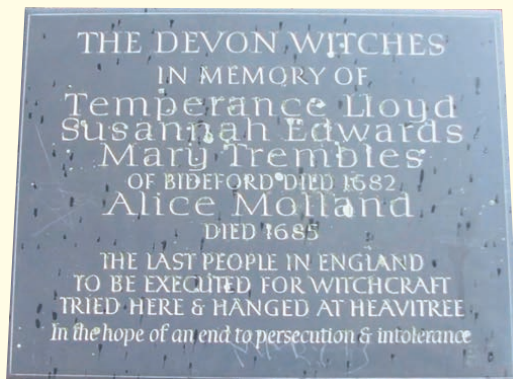
The Devon Witches are the most well-known local examples. Also called The Bideford Witches, Temperance Lloyd, Susannah Edwards and Mary Trembles were poor, elderly

women accused of witchcraft in 1682. Tried at Rougemont Castle in Exeter they were forced to confess to consorting with the devil. Hanged at Heavitree gallows they became the last people in England to be executed for witchcraft.

Anne referred to *The Trial of the Bideford Witches* written by Crediton resident, the late Frank J. Gent. She mentioned a press report of a brawl between two women in an (unnamed) Crediton pub which also resulted in an accusation of witchcraft.

Anne uses the old technique of knot weaving. Using texts and original illustrations, Anne makes a preparatory drawing, known as a cartoon, for each tapestry panel. Vertical warp threads are laid over the cartoon, then horizontal weft threads secured to the warp with double half-hitch knots. Large panels can take over a year to complete.

She includes texts and sayings in her tapestries, such as the story of Cornish witches who were believed to 'sell the wind' to sailors. A magic knotted rope, with three knots, could be untied, one knot at a time, to release the wind: one for a breeze, two for a wind, three for a storm. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly residents, who endured Storm Goretta in January, may wonder if witch power is still present?



Plaque at Rougemont Castle gatehouse, Exeter

Anne's work has been shown in galleries across Europe. She wants her tapestries to be enjoyed at all levels, from the detailed and lifelike depictions of plants and animals (witches were thought to shapeshift into animals, particularly cats) to the thought-provoking, sometimes gory messages and meanings behind the images. For more information about her work: www.annejackson.co.uk

As if on cue, while walking home afterwards I heard an owl hooting. (The ancient Romans believed that some women could transform themselves into owls.) Spooky!

NOTES

To learn more about witchcraft, you may want to visit the Museum of Witchcraft & Magic in Boscastle, Cornwall, which has over 3,000 items on display

The University of Exeter offers an MA in Magic & Occult Science

Also available from The Bookery is Devon's Forgotten Witches 1860-1910 by Tracy Norman and Mark Norman. Mark is curator of the Folklore Library & Archive (rear of Tanner's Yard, 100 High Street, Crediton)



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Libraries consultation: last chance!!

The Devon library service of 50 separate venues is funded by Devon County Council (DCC) but managed independently by charity Libraries Unlimited. The county is intending to reduce its funding, leaving the charity facing challenging conditions. Realising that its funding cannot sustain the current number of libraries and/or level of professional staffing and/or opening hours, DCC is asking everyone to complete a questionnaire.

If you haven't yet done so, please do! And emphasise the important role Crediton Library plays in our community.

But hurry! The consultation is open only until Sun 22 February. The results will inform a new strategy for our libraries, says DCC. It can be done on-line W: devonlibraries.commonplace.is/ or a hard copy may be found at the Library.

Neglected town council issues



No news is bad news: a blank space for several months now on wall by Adams

The Community Noticeboard, on a wall close to the Adams store, was damaged last autumn but, by the end of January, had not been replaced.

Meanwhile a damaged table has lain in a distressed condition on the Town Square. Why had it not been removed? Apparently there is no space in the rented storage until Xmas decorations have gone back in. And what of the other damaged table awaiting repairs? Will they be ready for a Spring return?



Table/bench left indefinitely on the Town Square?

We still await repairs to the town clock on the Old Town Hall. Apparently we're waiting for the availability of a cherry-picker to get up there ...

We also still await new town signs at three approaches to Crediton – which vanished about this time last year! Apparently Devon County Council forgot about re-ordering them.

Tesco and County Council slow to co-operate on bus shelter

Tesco's lack of concern for vulnerable residents, combined with Devon County Council Highways' failure to advance a rapid solution, mean that patients travelling by bus back from Redlands surgery are getting less patient at being left out in the rain, wind, cold and mud.

Tackling the inertia of elected councillors to lambast corporate culture and local authority bureaucracy is a largely thankless undertaking, but Crediton resident and community activist Gary Stanley has been agitating for a town-ward bus shelter serving Redlands doctors' surgery via his Facebook site *Crediton Matters*.

Non-car-owning elderly and/or infirm visitors awaiting buses on the grassy edge of a road owned by Tesco have neither roof nor seating provided, so must either stand in wind or rain, or risk missing an approaching bus while sheltering on the other side of the road.

Tesco's gritting omission

The consequences of bureaucratic/ corporate non-co-operation were highlighted during January's cold snap when DCC's gritting lorries avoided the icy road conditions on Joseph Locke Way on the grounds that it is still owned by Tesco - and so not the County Council's responsibility. Never mind that nearly all public buses to Crediton and beyond are routed this way! At least one vehicle collision was the inevitable result and on Jan 5 Stagecoach had to change the bus route for safety reasons.

Talk of tunnels

Lately in a local public house, talk turned to the tunnels under Crediton. Long-time Crediton residents are familiar with accounts, passed down over generations, of medieval tunnels running beneath church property in the directions of Dean Street, St Lawrence Green and even to Coombe House near Coleford. A number of blocked-up doorways at these sites are said to be former entrances. *Kirton Quarterly* would welcome any firm evidence on this topic.

New event to showcase boxing skills



Bang Bang Boxing at Mill Street

The most intriguing recipient at the December meeting of the town council's Grants Committee was the Mill Street-based gym Bang Bang Boxing, set up in 2024, which offers physical training and boxing skills.

The council agreed to award it £3,000 to fund the evening hire costs of the Leisure Centre's main hall on Sat 2nd May for a demonstration of skills by boxers in training (of all ages), their coaches - and around 450 spectators 'from all over Devon and further afield'.

Proprietor Jamie Parker, who runs the enterprise as a community interest company, explained that the up-front cost was needed "*to get the show up and running*" and hopes it will become a twice-yearly event. "*It sounds like a really good event for Crediton*", said Liz Brookes-Hocking, chairing the committee.

Scholar to decode Tudor document

Congratulations to Crediton resident Dr Charlotte Tupman of the University of Exeter who (with Prof. James Clark at Exeter and colleagues at Reading, Nottingham and The National Archives) has been awarded £1.5m funding by the Arts & Humanities

Research Council to research one of the most important documents of Henry VIII's reign: the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. This was a vast survey covering the property and wealth of early 16th-century religious houses in England and Wales, including churches, monasteries, cathedrals, chapels, schools, hospitals and poor houses. A searchable digital edition is the intended outcome at the conclusion of a 3-year project.

Retail news

Both staff and customers of Adams homeware store have been relieved that the long-established Crediton store has a new proprietor, Mustafa Khan. Best of luck for many future years of trading.

Sadly, though, Lewis's, tucked away in Hawkins Way (near the Royal Mail office) has closed its doors. Former customers for white goods – fridges, cookers, washing machines – and smaller items from kettles to radios, will need to go further afield. Lewis's servicing and repairs will be much missed.

Another closure, after 5 years of trading, is Heavyweight Tattoo (106 High St). Tattoo artist Jinx Cooper has now joined Siren Song Tattoo in Exeter's West Quarter. And nearby, the former Courier premises (102 High St) still awaits a new owner . . .

New future for eastern 'gateway'?

A local entrepreneur has purchased the long-neglected brick buildings, once agricultural



Scaffolding heralds re-development

supplies business Henry Norrington & Son Ltd, but latterly associated with Woods surplus and reclamation. Some residents will fondly remember items displayed outside ... a huge ship's propellor, an army tank, a pink stretched limousine?

The site, on what estate agent Helmores calls 'the gateway to Crediton', includes a house on four floors, a yard and commercial buildings. There is outline planning permission for 8 dwellings. Cornwall-based builders Serene Construction is hard at work securing the property and stripping down the interior.

Apologies to Ind. Est. providers!



Camper Coffee café: seek it out!

In our survey on Vegetarian Breakfasts (KQ8) we omitted to mention Camper Coffee's excellent small coffee bar (Unit 5, Creedy Vale - in the far corner of Lords Meadow Ind. Est. beyond Graphic plc).

And Lisa, who runs Al's Grill, the popular hot food trailer on Commonmarsh Lane at the top of Lords Meadow Ind. Est. (which actually doesn't do much in the vegetarian line, but the burgers are good value) points out she is open Mondays from 7.30am, as well as Tues-Fri.

MONTAGE - 2025 SUMMER FLORAL DISPLAYS

A reminder of colourful
seasons to come

Window box,
Landscape



Front-of house display, East Street



High Street:
railings by
Sunflowers
day nursery



Hanging basket at War Memorial,
Union Road

Geraniums
in pots, The
Red House,
Landscape



Trough at
Kiddicott,
near St
Lawrence
Green



Display on
traffic island by
Old Landscape
School

High Street
house, tub on
a front step



Window box at The Ship Hotel,
High Street

Thanks to all for brightening our lives
and local environment!

KIRTON QUARTERLY NOTES

Please send items for publication (e-mails preferred) by 15 April for the Summer 2026 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 West Quarter Publications

KQ is grateful to many kind people who have volunteered to deliver copies locally. We would very much appreciate a few more!

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

KQ ADVERTISING 2026 issues 10-12

Single issue rate:

Full page £180 | Half page £90 |

Quarter page £50 | Eighth page £25*

**NB: We are happy to help you prepare a basic design for no extra charge. For artwork specifications please contact pveclipse@btinternet.com*

Latest date for artwork for Summer issue is 20 April (magazine covering period mid-May - end of August)

Bookings for all three remaining issues of 2026 (KQ10-12) will receive a 20% discount on the total bill. Invoices payable following publication of KQ10 (mid-May)



Tuesday 24th
February

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**TIM WEAVER in conversation with
Holly Watt discussing THE LOST
WOMEN**

Thursday 5th
March

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**VERONICA HENRY & LIZ FENWICK
discussing their new books with
Anne Oxborough OBE**

Thursday 26th
March

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**HELEN BAIN discussing her new
book DAFFODIL DAYS**

Wednesday 1st
April

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**C.M. EWAN in conversation with
Tina Orr Munro discussing EYE SPY**

Thursday 16th
April

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**PATRICK GALE in conversation with
Alison Sweatman discussing
LOVE LANE**

Thursday 30th
April

7.00pm at
The Bookery

**ZAKIA SEWELL in conversation with
Mark Norman discussing ALBION**

Tickets from The Bookery,
21 High Street, Crediton, EX17 3AH
or visit www.thebookery.org.uk



CREDITON SPRING CALENDAR 2026

Info for next issue required by 15 April (covering period 15 May to end of August)

See previous page for events at *The Bookery*.

For events at **Crediton Arts Centre**, please pick up copy of its seasonal brochure from Library or Post Office or visit W: creditonartscentre.org

CREDITON TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

For venue see meeting Agenda posted on CTC website

Tues 17 Feb, 7.30pm **Full Council** (incl. Finance)

Tues 3 March 7pm for 7.30pm
Informal discussions, then **Full Council** (incl Planning)

Tues 17 March 7.30pm **Full Council** (incl Finance)

Tues 7 April, 7pm
Informal discussions, then **Full Council** (incl Planning)

Tues 21 April, 7.30pm **Full Council** (incl Finance)

Tues 5 May, 7pm for 7.30pm
Informal discussions, then Full Council (incl Planning)

Tues 19 May, 7.30pm **Full Council: Annual Meeting** (incl election of Chair/Mayor for 2026/27)

CIVIC & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Sat 28 Feb, 11-2pm
SEED SHARE Annual community event (Sus Cred) Boniface Ctre

Sat 14 March, 9.30am - 1pm
CREDITON COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Future planning for local housing, open space, High Street, transport. Participants are expected to attend for duration of event. (Sus Cred/CTC) Boniface Ctre

1st & 3rd Saturdays
FARMERS MARKET
9.30 - 1pm
Town Square

2nd Sat of month, 10-12
[CUT!]
community weeding & path tidying: contact town council to join in

4th Sat of month, 10-12
REPAIR CAFÉ
(Sus Cred) Elephant

PERFORMANCES/ EXHIBITIONS/TALKS/ WORKSHOPS
Tues 17 Feb, 7pm
POLITICS & HISTORY BOOK GROUP
The Bookery [B]

Wed 18 Feb 10am
Talk: **MINING AND SOCIETY** (u3a)
Boniface Ctre

Fri 27 Feb, 7pm
Film & discussion: **SYSTEM UPDATE: REBOOTING OUR FUTURE** (Sus Cred)
Arts Centre

Sat Feb 28, 7.30pm
Opera: **CARMEN**
(Exeter Opera Group)
Arts Centre [B]

Wed 18 March, 10am
Talk: **LEYS: EARTH ENERGY LINES AROUND CREDITON**
(u3a/Devon Dowsters)
Boniface Ctre

Sun 22 March, 10-4pm
SHARE IN THE SQUARE
Local musicians
Town Square

Tues 24 March, 7pm
Talk: **HISTORY OF GARDENING** (Crediton Garden Club)
Library

Wed 25 March, 7.30pm
ACOUSTIC BY CANDLELIGHT Local musicians (Arts Centre)
St Lawrence Chapel, Threshers [B]

Sat 28 March, 7.30pm
KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN
Folk music (Arts Centre)
Venue: CCC [B]

Tues 14 – Sat 18 April, 7.30pm + Sat 2.30pm
JOSEPH & THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOUR DREAMCOAT
(CODS) QE Lower School, Barnfield [B]

Wed 15 April, 10am
Talk: **SMALLPOX, SILVERWARE & 600 YEARS OF HISTORY** (u3a)
Boniface Ctre

Sat 16 May, 7.30pm
Opera: **LA CENERENTOLA**
(Exeter Opera Group)
Arts Centre

Sun 17 May, 3pm
Concert: **KAMMER-
PHILHARMONIE EUROPA**
(SBCS)
Parish church

Wed 20 May, 10am
Talk: **CARAVAGGIO:
GENIUS & CHAOS**
(u3a) Boniface Centre

REGULAR ENTERTAINMENT
3rd Thurs, 7.30pm
MOON JAZZ CLUB
Three Little Pigs

1st & 3rd Fri, 7.30pm
CURIOUS CINEMA CLUB
Elephant

2nd Fri of month, 7pm
OPEN MIC NIGHT
(Night Train)
Elephant

**REGULAR SOCIAL EVENTS/
ACTIVITIES**
Tues 10-11.30am
TUESDAY DROP-IN
(coffee social)
Boniface Ctre

Tues 10.30am-12
KNITWITS (knitting)
Library

Wed 10am-12
CAUSEWAY
NB: suspended during Feb
due to renovations at CCC

Thurs 10-11.30am
COFFEE & COMPANY
(esp older residents) NB:
suspended during Feb due
to renovations at CCC

4th Fri, 6.30pm
BSL SOCIAL
(deaf/hard of hearing)
Elephant. NB: Feb is skittles
eve at Waie Inn

Sat, 10am
TOGETHER 4 COFFEE
Methodist Church

SPORTS FIXTURES
Crediton Rugby Club,
creditonrfc.rfu.club
Exhibition Road

Crediton United AFC
(football)
fulltime.thefa.com/
Lords Meadow

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

Congregational Church
(CCC)
NB: During Feb Sun
services are at 3pm at
Landscape Primary School
due to renovations at CCC

Methodist Church Sun,
10.30am

Rediscover Church
Wed, 7.30pm at Elephant

St Boniface R.C. Church
Sun, 9.30am

OUT OF TOWN
Sat 14 March, from
11.30am
YEOFEST
**16th Beer festival & live
entertainment**
Yeoford Community Hall
Tip: go by train!

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
& organisations. See
also *Crediton Courier's*
Kirtan Raiser events diary,
published Thurs weekly.

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

Abbreviations

BSL = British Sign
Language; CAHMS =
Crediton Area History &
Museum Society; CCC =
Crediton Congregational
Church; CODS = Crediton
Operatic & Drama Society;
CTC = Crediton Town
Council; CUFC = Crediton
United Football Club;
[CUT!] = Crediton Urban
Taskforce; CYT = Crediton
Youth Theatre; Elephant
= Elephant on the Green;
SBCS = St Boniface Concert
Society; Sus Cred =
Sustainable Crediton; u3a
= University of the 3rd Age

Useful websites

crediton.gov.uk/Your-
Council/Meetings

u3asites.org.uk/
crediton/home

creditoninandaround.co.uk



Rachel Toll, watercolour artist



Flight of Mystery and Elegance, watercolour on paper, 21 x 30cm

Rachel Toll is a self-taught artist living in Crediton. She has worked in watercolours for over 30 years, and exhibited with the South West Academy of Fine Arts. Her work has been shortlisted on several occasions for the Wildlife Artist of the Year award. She was commissioned to provide paintings of birds of the Exe estuary for Lympstone Manor Hotel where they adorn reception areas and each of its 21 bedrooms.

W: watercoloursbyrachel.co.uk/



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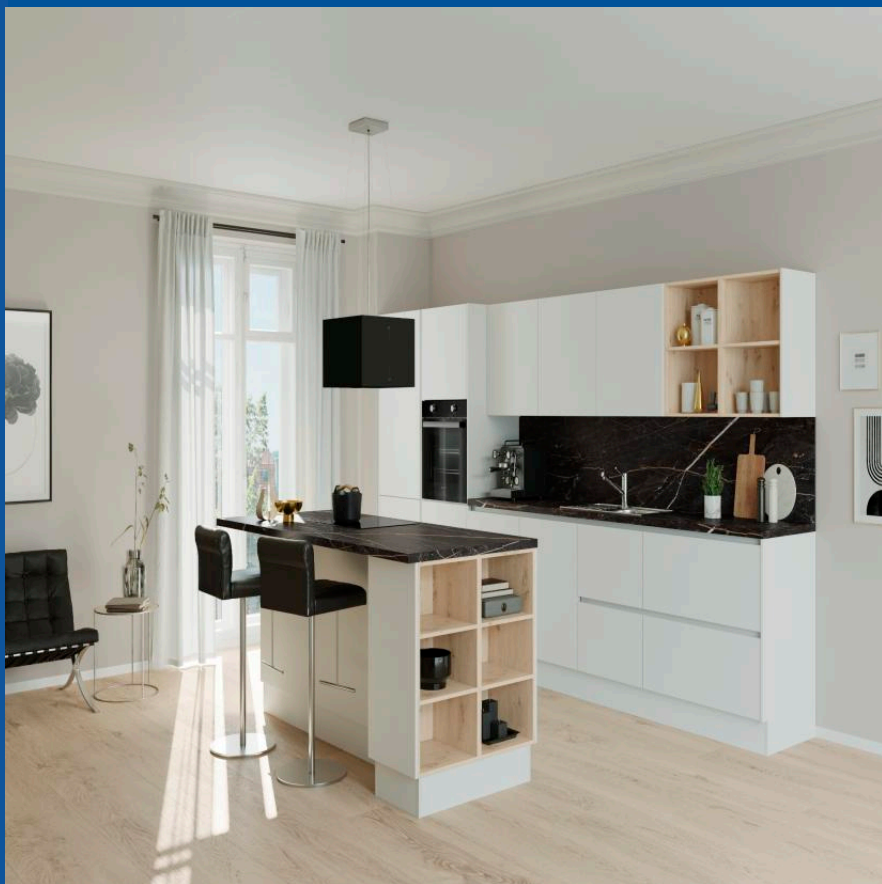
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