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ELECTRICITY Scottish Power (Manweb as was)	0800 001 5400
KNOCKIN Medical Practice	01691 682203
NHS Out of Hours Service	111
Orthopaedic Hospital	01691 404000
PARISH COUNCIL email: westfeltonpc@gmail.com https://www.westfeltonparish.co.uk/	
POLICE, West Mercia Non-Emergency number Oswestry Police Station	101 0300 333 3000
Safer Neighbourhood team—email: oswestryc.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk	
PRADOE CHURCH: Chairman: Andrew Kenyon	01691 610218
PUNCH BOWL	07543 040618
QUEENS HEAD RESTAURANT	01691 610255
RAIL STATION, GOBOWEN	01691 681010
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: Fr Philip Holy Mass Saturday 6:30 pm, Sunday 10 am	01691 652248
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SCHOOL – West Felton C E School	01691 610388
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SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Anti-Social Report Line	0345 6789000 0345 6789020
Shrops Councillor: Cllr David Walker	01743 256863/ M 07484 541576
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH: MINISTRY vacant Church Warden: Dr Michael Davie	01691 610612
ST. CHAD'S: Chapel Warden: Mrs Ann Hampson	01691 610845
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION	01691 610665
VILLAGE HALL Bookings	01691 610629
WASP Problems Emergency number	01691 831251 / 07772 006994
WATER - Severn Trent Water Authority	0800 783 4444
WOMEN'S INSTITUTE: President: Rhian	07375 997 782

ROUND and ABOUT WEST FELTON

www.westfeltonmagazine.co.uk

Supporting local business - Supporting the community

West Felton Annual Parish Meeting

Tuesday 14 April 2026 at 7pm.

It's your community meeting!

Please join us in the School Hall.

The monthly Parish Council meeting
will follow immediately after at 7:30pm.

Updates -
from Local
Groups

Discuss -
future projects

Talk - to
your local
Councillors



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N

Parish Council	Second Tues of the month, 7:30	School Hall
West Felton Walkers	10am Mondays, Punch Bowl	EXCEPT...see page 17
Pilates Class	Tuesday mornings: 2 sessions: 9:30-10:30 & 10:45-11:45am	Need to book online GYMATCH. Phone: Abi 07904 456 368
Tai Chi	Tuesday 2pm to 3pm,	Village Hall
Badminton	Every Tues evening: 8pm to 9:30pm.	Village Hall
Tuesday Tots	Every term time Tuesday 9.15 - 10.30	West Felton School
Felton Flexors	Wednesday mornings 9:30am to 10:30am	Village Hall
Table Tennis	Thursday 7:30pm	Village Hall
WI	2nd Thursday of the month 7pm	Village Hall
Short Mat Bowls	contact Glynnis on 01691 610336	
Royal British Legion	INFORMAL MEETINGS 8pm Meeting, PUNCH BOWL first Monday of the month except Bank holidays then second Monday.	

2nd April	10am: COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING, Village Hall	17
5th April	9:30am EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE, St Michael's Church	
14th April	7pm: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, the school hall	
16th April	7pm County Councillor Surgery, The Punch Bowl <i>see below</i>	
12th July	CARNIVAL DAY.	

YOUR opportunity to engage personally with your LOCAL COUNTY COUNCILLOR



3rd Thursday each month | Next surgery 16th April

WEST FELTON - 7pm to 8pm: at The Punch Bowl, at the back of the restaurant.
 or **WHITTINGTON**: 10am to 11am at Senior Citizens Hall, Station Road, Whittington in the back room - coinciding with coffee morning.

Cllr David Walker, Whittington Division: 01743 256863,
Email: CllrDavid.Walker@shropshire.gov.uk | M: 07484 541576

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Round and About West Felton

Articles/advertisement amendments for inclusion
in next issue
to Editor by email (preferred) or phone

Last day for submission of copy and
deadline for content changes
10th APRIL 2026

Editor: Colleen Hughes

Tel 01691 610300

colleenhughes748@btinternet.com

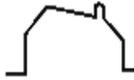
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Sunday 3 May –	Morning Service
Sunday 7 June –	Morning Service

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WEST FELTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to West Felton Parish Council: **Mrs Rosemary WOOD**

Parish Office: 5 Newtown Gardens

Baschurch, Shrewsbury SY4 2HF Tel 01939 262 881

Email: **see list.** Website: **www.westfelton-pc.gov.uk**

Chairman Cllr John THORNHILL 07714 759 466
Vice-Chairman Cllr Ozcan OZAGIR 07955 232 199
 Cllr David CURTIS 01691 610 665 (Rep WF Primary School & SALC Area Committee)

Cllr Alastair FORBES 01691 610 524
 Cllr Mick GREEN 07928 479 305
 Cllr Marian HESKETH 01691 610 441 (Rep for Village Hall).
 Cllr Chris JONES 01691 610 354 (Rep SALC Area Committee).
 Cllr Pat MABE 01691 610 400
 Cllr Ed NICHOLAS 01691 610 230 (Rep ABP committee)
 Cllr Neil SUMMERS 07523 318 005
 Cllr David WALKER 01691 897 117

Our Shropshire Councillor : Cllr David Walker T: 01743 256863
 Mobile: 07484 541576

Our Member of Parliament : Helen Morgan T: 01939 809387
 E: helen.morgan.mp@parliament.uk

PLEASE NOTE NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR PARISH CLERK AND COUNCILLORS

Rosemary Wood	clerk@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
John Thornhill	john.thornhill@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Ozcan Ozagir	ozcan.ozagir@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
David Walker	david.walker@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Marian Hesketh	marian.hesketh@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
David Curtis	david.curtis@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Ed Nicholas	edward.nicholas@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Pat Mabe	pat.mabe@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Chris Jones	chris.jones@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
Alastair Forbes	alastair.forbes@westfelton-pc.gov.uk
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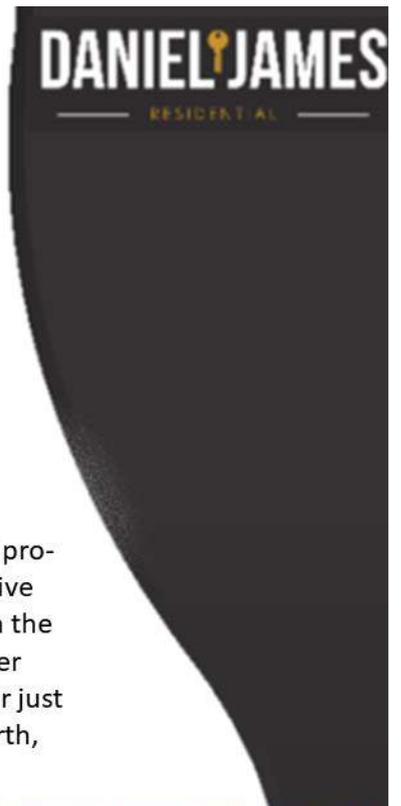
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WEST FELTON PARISH COUNCIL Report from Chairman Cllr John Thornhill

Neighbourhood Plan

A meeting of the **Parish Neighbourhood planning team** was held on 26th February 2026 in the Parish Hall. It was attended by ten members of the parish and three members of the Parish Council. Three other members of the parish apologised for not attending. In total there are therefore fifteen parish members and three Parish Council members on the group.

The attendees were provided with a summary document: **Stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan**, which sets out the whole process from start to final agreement and implementation of the Plan. They were also provided with copies of the Parish Plan 'neighbourhood area' and Conservation area.

The meeting worked through the summary document noting that the 'neighbourhood area' had already been agreed. It was understood that at present there is no Shropshire Council Plan but there was a strong view that we should continue with the Parish Neighbourhood Plan ready for the new version of the Local Plan.

There was positive enthusiasm for this project and wide ranging discussion on how to achieve it.

There was concern expressed about the size of the Parish Plan Area with large areas that were mainly farming and arable tracts with limited population. There was debate about how to preserve the nature of West Felton which has a Conservation Area and under the 2015 SamDev (Site Allocations and Management of Development) Plan it is considered Open Countryside. The group also discussed the dearth of amenities within the area and considered this might be a matter for future discussion.

It is essential that everyone in the Parish Area has an opportunity to engage with the process. A lot of time was spent on how to ensure a positive and widespread public consultation on the draft plan and what avenues of communication could be considered to reach all members of the parish during this process and the final referendum. If you have any views on this

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

matter please send them in to the parish clerk.

A very good opening meeting and with positive recognition of the amount of work that will have to be undertaken to create an effective plan for the village. All attendees were prepared to become fully involved.

It was agreed the next meeting would consider communication procedures and processes and begin to look at the Area Plan to identify possible locations for housing development which would preserve the rural nature of West Felton.

Website.

There is good progress on the development of the new website and already discrete email addresses have been created for all members of the Parish Council. We would like to include photographs, particularly aerial, of the village, so if anyone has any suitable pictures of the village over the years please contact the clerk.

Parish Meeting.

It is proposed that the Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tues-

day 14 April 2026 commencing at 7 pm. This will be followed by the monthly Council meeting.

Fly Tipping.

The PC reflected on an email from a member of the Parish concerned about the increase in Fly tipping at the Holyhead Road lay-by. I am pleased to say that the report of a caravan left there was positive and that action was taken quickly to remove it. The Council decided not to place signs and a camera at the site as it felt that this might only be a short lived response.

LED Street Lighting on The Avenue.

Our Shropshire Council representative, David Walker, has made some progress on this matter and had a response from Jason Hughes who is the Shropshire Council officer with responsibility for this matter. He has also been in contact with National Highways and will further pursue this matter.

Youth Club Grant Application.

A representative of the applicant All A4 attended the meeting and gave a short introduction followed

(Continued on page 9)



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(Continued from page 8)

by questions. It was agreed that the concept of a Youth Club based at the Primary School on a Friday from 4 15pm – 6pm was a positive step forward for the village. The Council agreed to provide a ‘one off’ start up grant of £500 to allow the club to begin operating and become self sufficient. ●



**Shropshire Councillor Report –
 Councillor David Walker**

Over the past month I’ve continued to devote a significant amount of time to West Felton where planning pressures, Highways concerns, enforcement issues and community enquiries have remained particularly active. With 3 live speculative applications I have argued with officers that West Felton should be downgraded in future and for settlement hierarchy assessments to be weighted by local services and infrastructure availability. I continue to make sure the cumulative impact of development is not downplayed in officer assessments.

This month I’ve also dealt with a number of highways issues raised by residents—ranging from potholes and surface deterioration to drainage and runoff concerns. I’ve

chased National Highways about the surface condition of Fox Lane footbridge again. Progressed the new streetlight on the Avenue and fed that back to the parish clerk.

Last week I facilitated a meeting with officers and key members about stronger policy on Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) to ensure rainfall run-off is properly dealt with on site for new developments. Constantly adding new run-off into poor drainage systems is not sustainable, particularly given the government’s high mandatory housing targets for Shropshire. This run-off exacerbates pothole problems if rainwater sits on the roads.

With record high rainfall this winter, most of the country has seen an explosion of potholes. Despite this, in January 2026, Shropshire Council repaired 2,113 potholes

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Tanat to Perry Community Wildlife Group
Please help with our Bird Survey, and Save our Curlews.
It's not too late to help with our Curlew and Lapwing survey. If you can recognise Lapwing and Curlew (and preferably their calls), you can make an important contribution.



Our area extends from Oswestry in the north to Kinnerley in the south, and eastward from the Welsh border to Ruyton-XI-Towns.

The survey only involves three 3-hour visits, between the beginning of April and mid-June, simple instructions and a map to record your observations are provided, and there will be a training session if you want to come.

If possible, we'd like you to record Kestrel, Cuckoo and Red Kite too, please, but that's an optional extra.

Our bird survey is the first stage of the Save our Curlews project, as it locates the pairs of Curlews to focus the efforts of the nest-finders. Surveyors are not expected to look for nests.

Save our Curlews

There are about half a dozen breeding pairs of Curlew in our area, We are looking for them all again this year, and we will also be working with Shropshire Ornithological Society's Save our Curlews Campaign, which aims to find as many nests as possible, protect them from predation and trampling with an electric fence, then fix a radio tag to the chicks that hatch and track them to see how they use the landscape, and what happens to them. Finding out why breeding productivity is so poor is key to working out an effective conservation plan.

For more information, please see the Tanat to Perry pages on the Community Wildlife Groups

website <https://www.shropscwgs.org.uk/tanat-to-perry-wildlife-group/>

If you want to help, it's not too late to join. Please email me:
leo@leosmith.org.uk

Leo Smith



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(Continued from page 9)

compared to 1,216 in January 2025 - a 77% increase despite the weather. Achieved in part by extending the contract of Multevo who operates out of Rednal Industrial Estate. From the 1st of April Multevo's role will be further extended from A and B roads to include C-class side roads. The shift of resources away from Keir means better efficiencies and capacity to create a team focused on drainage issues, which should help ease localized flooding problems. Shropshire Council has already expanded the Multevo teams by 2. Spending on potholes is due to increase by £1.2m from April 2026 and by a further £5.3m in 2027/28. Since May last year over 21,000 potholes have been repaired; 25 roads (61km) have been surface dressed, with 41 roads (51km) resurfaced. Shropshire Council has just announced a road repair surge with 72 roads to be surface

dressed and another 69 to be resurfaced.

On the budget front, the Government recognized the shortcomings of the financial settlement we received from them - a 12% reduction compared to rises in urban

areas like Telford. But rather than give us the money we needed, they said we could raise council tax by 8.99% instead and granted our request for Exceptional Financial Support. EFS isn't a Government bailout but is more like an overdraft facility. This must be repaid with interest. So, it is imperative that this money is used wisely to transform council services, cut costs, and increase income. Equally important is that we only draw down what we need. We still must make record cuts, cutting out non-essential services, but it is good that the Government has confidence in our plans to change the council. So much so that the Government has invited Shropshire Council to participate in a pilot scheme to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support and accelerate the Council's improvement. The pilot seeks to provide additional capacity and expertise, focusing on the financial transformation activity required to achieve a sustainable budget and stabilize the financial position.

Despite the 8.99% rise Shropshire remains at the low end for Band D compared to other unitary coun-

(Continued on page 13)



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Charlotte Roberts

She/Her

Marketing & Communications Officer

c.roberts@qube-oca.org.uk

Volunteers needed at Oswestry Community Action (OCA)

Oswestry Community Action (OCA) is on the lookout for more volunteers. Volunteer support is pivotal to the retention and growth of the fundamental services they have to offer to the people in the local and wider Shropshire area.

The services OCA offer have been developed in response to the needs of the local community and ultimately aim to keep them engaged and support inclusivity and wellbeing. The majority of their services are aimed at those who are disadvantaged which includes disability, health (including mental health), unemployment, rural poverty and isolation.

Their Community Transport Service is essential for enabling people in the community to get out and about with ease and makes a huge difference in their lives. The Dial-a-Ride and Community Car services are a large proportion of this service and offer door-to-door transport for people without access to public transport or a car. Journeys can include anything from grocery shopping, a trip to the hairdressers or even regular journeys such as attendance at the OCA twice-weekly Wellbeing & Befriending groups, which help to maintain connection and engagement within the community.

Chief Officer at Oswestry Community Action, Kim Wootton says; "We currently have over 900 members signed up to our Community Transport Service, but we cannot service all of these people without more volunteer Community Transport Drivers. If more keen driver volunteers come forward and join OCA we will be able to continue our mission to combat isolation and rural poverty and improve wellbeing amongst the community."

Without their fantastic, friendly team of volunteers, Oswestry Community Action wouldn't be able to make the difference they do in the community. To enable OCA to support more local people, if you have some spare time and want to immerse yourself in a fabulous community project, please get in touch, email info@qube-oca.org.uk or call 01691 656882.●

We're on the hunt for Volunteer Community Transport Drivers!

Our members need you!

We now have over 900 members using our Community Transport service, so we're looking for more volunteer drivers to enable us to deliver our invaluable transport service to even more of them!

If you'd love to give something back to your local community hub, please get in touch.



Hear it from a volunteer...



Harry Pickavance
Volunteer Dial-a-Ride Driver

As a Dial-a-Ride volunteer I give up my time to help others make journeys which they may not be able to undertake without the help of our Community Transport service. These trips may be to support groups, shopping, medical appointments, and/or any other activities which may be essential or provide enrichment to their lives.

Get in touch with our Volunteer Coordinator, Jo to find out more! Call **01691 656882** or email on j.longetti@qube-oca.org.uk

oca Oswestry Community Action, Oswald Road, Oswestry SY11 1RB | 01691 656882
info@qube-oca.org.uk | www.qube-oca.org.uk
oswestry community action /Qubeoswestry oswestry_community_action /oswestrycommunityaction

(Continued from page 11) County Councillor reports: Herefordshire £2067.63; Cheshire West £2076.79; Cheshire East £1975.95; Shropshire £1969.09; Northumberland £2382.00. This Council tax rise will mean that we borrow less from the Government and therefore pay less interest. None of this is easy, and we would rather we hadn't been left with this mess. For those facing hardship there is extra support available here:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-assistance/>

where options include paying over 12 months rather than 10 months.

This budget allows the council to recruit extra revenues and benefits staff to improve our collection rates and support more people in

need. It will also allow us to recruit more officers in legal and planning which generate income from developers, as well as making the transformations we need to reduce costs and improve service efficiency.

As always please feel free to get in touch if you need to or drop into one of my advice surgeries on the Third Thursday each month. See page 2.

Cllr David Walker

Landline: 01743 256863

Mobile: 07484 541576

(also WhatsApp)

<https://cllrdavidwalker.org/>

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(Continued from page 41)

there: now a small hamlet,
people can use it for recreation.

* Flaxpool – name derived from
the fields of flax around it.

We had a famous Rector of West
Felton Church in 1866. Benjamin
Hall Kennedy, most distinguished,
brilliant scholar at Shrewsbury
School and St. John's College,
Cambridge. Head master of
Shrewsbury School and Eton.
Greatest classical teacher of the
century - *Kennedy's Latin Gram-
mar published.1841* .

There are two ghosts in West Felton.

A traditionally dressed ghost
haunts the Nursery gardens and
woods especially during parties,
peeping through the windows. It
vanishes on contact with a lighted
candle, and chases away evil spir-
its.

The Pradoe ghost haunts inside
the house, but is only seen by
women. It is dressed in black

breeches and stockings, white cra-
vat and black coat, accompanied
by a King Charles spaniel. Maybe
the ghost of the Rev. Pritchard,
who built Pradoe? It once fright-
ened a labrador who retreated,
hackles up, howling as he rushed
from the room.●

A Vagrant 1820

*by Mr Hickson who lived by the
lane side, hence Hickson's lane.*

**1) In West Felton village, I've got an
old stable, I've restored it to live in
as far as I'm able.**

**I've got m' old dog and a cat's living
with me, and I's very contented but
hard up as can be.**

**2) I get up at dawn and work till
light fails, At hedging and harvest
in sunshine an' gales,**

**I visit the pubs, and like a good nat-
ter, And soon fall asleep after all the
chatter.**

**3) Tis a wonderful life in the coun-
try to-day. So peaceful and quiet,
and nature so gay.**

**I thank the good Lord every even-
ing, and pray
For health and strength to enjoy
the next day.**

^[1] *The population of the West Felton civil parish was 1,601 in the 2021 Cen-
sus, an increase from 1475 in the 2011 Census. The civil parish includes the
main village of West Felton along with surrounding hamlets such as Grimpo,
Haughton, and Rednal.*

^[2] *The area around West Felton was highly active during the English Civil War
in 1644, particularly around the Battle of Oswestry on June 22 1644. Shrop-
shire was vital to King Charles I due to its position on the Welsh border, with
Shrewsbury acting as a key Royalist stronghold.*

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(Continued from page 39)

and bridge. St. Chads Church, Haughton was built in 1887, as a Chapel of Ease for the Tedsmore Estate and now in charge of the Rector. Pradoc Church, built in 1861 was a Chapel of Ease for the Pradoc Estate. Methodists used the 'Box' on the Cross until the present Chapel was built in 1909 and Congregationalists used the small tabernacle at Weirbrook until the present Chapel was built in 1910.

St. Winifred's Well, Woolston, sprung up where her body rested on its way from Holywell to Shrewsbury. A black and white building stands over the spring said to have healing powers for the eyes. Bishop's Well is where the Bishop washed his feet after resting on the Bishop's stone, now on Bishop's corner.

Threadneedle Well was the first source of water for Felton in the 11th century.

Other important buildings include the Nursery, now being demolished. With a small chapel, it was built by the Dovaston family.

Hanley Hall was a retreat for monks from St. Giles, Shrewsbury. Abbots Moor was a retreat for

monks from Haughmond Abbey and the Holding, Rednal was a monastery.

The New Inn, now The Fox, was the only public house in Felton in 1777. The Plough Inn, now two black and white cottages, followed in 1819, and The Lion was the older part of Milnecroft, and also a toll house. The Harp Farm was a public house until 1837 and was rebuilt in 1877. Lady Hill Farm, once called Balaclava, was built during the Crimean war.

The Tithe Barn still stands, and West Felton clergy had the highest stipend in the district.

The original buildings at the wharf, Queens Head, still stand.

Can we conserve our heritage?

- * The fine Dovastonian Yew trees round the Nursery, only a few left in the British Isles.
- * West Felton Heath battle fields - battle fought in 1644. ^[2]
- * The Ducking Pools - Yarson and Haughton. A man was ducked in 1870 for catching two rabbits to feed his children.
- * Grimpo - derived from Grim-pool, a common remains - no deeds. Gipsies often camped

(Continued on page 43)

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West Felton - by a West Felton WI member in the 1990s.

West Felton, an Anglo-Saxon village, is situated in the north west of the county. To find the meaning of 'Felton' we have to split the word: 'Fel' means fall of the tree and 'ton' means landed gentry or squires. (*Other interpretations are available. Ed.*) The 'West' was added, probably around the 12th. century, when the drapers would rest on the way from Shrewsbury to the very important woollen market in Oswestry. The wool packers' stone can still be seen by the Punch Bowl Inn.

The population fluctuated over the years from 926 in 1801, rising to 1080 in 1891, 1000 in 1963 and decreasing to 850 today. ^[1]

Life has changed over the years. Farming, with meadows called Fairyland, Lords Cross, Rising Sun, was the main work in the area, so the houses were built in hamlets around the farms and estates. The area boasted nine blacksmiths in earlier times - an important asset to the village life.

Between 1844 and 1862 the village had a curfew bell that rang everyday at 5am and 7pm. The farm workers relied on this bell for

getting to work on time and all the children had to be in the house by the 7pm. bell. A fayre was held once a year during the 1800s for one day. Usually, the whole village turned out unless sick or infirm. Sports, round-a-bouts and swings, plenty to watch or take part in. At twilight it finished with a tug-of-war and dancing until midnight.

The area had & glass factory and during the war there was the R.A.F. base.

Today we have the Post Office, the School, 2 Public Houses and a Military Museum. Many of the farms have disappeared. Most people travel out of West Felton for their work. Life was difficult with the A5 running through the village but now there is the By-Pass taking the heavy traffic away and bringing in developments of large expensive houses. Fortunately there is still a village atmosphere and there are activities for young and old.

Among the interesting buildings there is the 11th. Century Church of St. Michael, situated in the West of the village. The list of Rectors goes back to 1305. In the tower are three very fine bells. Behind the church stood a castle, moat

(Continued on page 41)

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West Felton Women's Institute February activities



Despite all the adverse weather West Felton WI keeps buoyant in spirit. January's get together had to be cancelled because of the incoming snow which was the sensible thing to do in the circumstances. Members stayed in the warmth of home and had access to a diverting quiz – anyone: whose wedding cake (one tier only) in the 1800s was an amazing three yards wide and weighed 300lbs? That's our sort of cake!

Ross Millar from Dance HQ entertained us at February's meeting. We found out about the history of dance together with his being inspired by Michael Flatley of 'Riverdance' fame and by the dancing in 'Mary Poppins' – all that Step in Time –ing by the chimney sweeps on the rooftops of Edwardian London. Then we watched as Ross, partnered by Maddie, elegantly ballroom danced, foxtrotted and finally tangoed across the floor of the village hall. It was of, course, our turn to then take to the floor and we were coached in the steps of the cha-cha –cha which was great fun even if it led to a little breathlessness!

The flower competition brought out some beautiful hellebores, iris and other blooms while the themed competition for a sparkling item produced entries such as a hand crafted glittering rose and a heart-shaped and heart-decorated cork notice board with the motto 'Less Bitter...More Glitter!' Many thanks to the evening's hostesses for delicious refreshments and much needed tea after all that exertion on the dance floor.

Plenty to look forward to in the coming months whether it's a visiting speaker, lunch out or an evening jaunt. We maintain close links with our fellow WIs in the Oswestry North Group and there's also a Shropshire Federation Ramble in Much Wenlock to herald the spring. We may even have an Escape Room experience which sounds fun. If only we could escape this rain...!

The next meeting will be on Thursday March 12th at 7pm when we'll welcome Sue Blower, Montgomery's very own Town Crier.

Do give the WI a try! For further information tel. 07375997782

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(Continued from page 35) Church and State

the West, the position in Eastern Europe has been more volatile. In Tsarist Russia, the Tsars kept a hand on the tiller of the Orthodox Church. Tsar Peter the Great created the Holy Synod and appointed its head. Stalin destroyed churches identifying them as physical symbols of spiritual belief to which people could cling. He tried to stamp out religion but never succeeded. The Orthodox Church in Russia has been denounced as an agency of the state and a political propaganda weapon by the Orthodox ecumenical Patriarch. For this he was described as the devil incarnate by the Russian Intelligence services. Meanwhile Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church endeavours to keep on the right side of President Putin whilst the Russian president never misses an opportunity to be shown crossing himself in church.

Meanwhile down in the Caucasus tension is rising between the government and the Armenian (Catholic) church. The dispute appears to have been precipitated by the church's opposition to territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. The intense state intervention suggests that there is a power struggle behind the scenes. Bishops have been arrested and imprisoned and the head of the church is accused of sexual impropriety and

enriching the church.

Further East, state and religion, far from being separate, have now become fused. The Supreme Leader in Iran now controls the economy and the religious entity. State law and religious law are as one, much as was the case in the West at one time. Effectively there is compulsory religion – the state gives instruction about what you can do. Go one step further to China where churches are either destroyed or vandalised; religious practices are strongly discouraged and the secular state decides what the people can do.

Has this gallop through history helped reach any conclusion? It appears that in the short term the state will always win. The church should play a long game emphasizing those attributes that fulfil its gospel. Overplaying its hand will lead to unpopularity as in Iran. Enforcing a single religious position avoids controversies such as for example, when "thou shalt love thy neighbour" competes with the handling of same sex relationships. Already in the UK tensions arise at times when Muslims wish that Sharia law should override State law. Lastly statesmen have recognised that church buildings are valuable symbols of faith, a point that should not be lost on the Church of England. ●

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Up the Garden Path with Topiarius

Prime sowing month

During some of the relentless rain we had earlier I reread a couple of Marjorie Fish books and found them as helpful now as 70 years ago. **We Made a Garden** is so full of commonsense advice and her observations on plants are so obviously from real first hand experience. A really good reminder lesson. Plant varieties have of course moved on but I was at first surprised and pleased to see many that we have in our garden—but then we started planting not long after Marjorie wrote her book.

Not in Marjorie Fish but in the earthworm book, I was also rereading an article on starting and looking after a compost heap. It is supposed to be so organised with 50:50 of green and brown material in layers and the whole thing turned over at least once. Marjorie Fish's method is even more complicated, even extending to aerating pipes. Mine is simple, pile on the waste as it appears. Anything vegetable is fair game except for weeds, and hard woody stems. I have two concrete block bunkers, one with finished compost and one being filled. When one lot of compost is used up the top layers from the other heap are moved over to reveal the ready to use compost below and the process repeated. The cycle is more

or less one year which is very convenient. I don't think my compost would win prizes but it is perfectly adequate.

April is the full scale seed sowing and planting month. Simply for space and work load reasons I space out sowing bedding through March and April, so there are several varieties to be dealt with. They are followed by any perennials and hardy annuals that I have on my must have or need to try lists. The odds are that begonia tubers will start to sprout and need to be potted up. Then there are the tender vegetables, tomatoes, cucumbers, courgette and squash. I buy in pepper plants rather than sow seed as they need a long growing season.

When you emerge from the potting shed, kitchen or wherever you sow indoor things, early potatoes, radish, swede, land cress, broad beans, sprouts and sprouting broccoli are amongst the vegetables that can be sown now. I prefer to sow all the brassica, cress and lettuce in tray inserts and put in a sheltered spot rather than directly in the vegetable plot.

I treat all plants in containers with a liquid feed on a monthly basis starting this month. The grass will have lawn sand applied and a couple

(Continued on page 23)

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Church and State

Michael Davie

These days in the UK we are not used to religion and the state being at loggerheads – though we'll overlook the Chancellor's stinginess over abolishing VAT exemption for church repairs. In other countries religion continues to upset the state or itself actively meddles in state affairs.

In the past religion and the state were often intertwined, with each seeking to gain benefit from the other. Christianity and the Roman state did not get on together until Constantine made Christianity the religion of the Empire. In 800AD however it was the turn of Pope Leo III to turn to Charlemagne, King of the Franks (loosely modern day Germany and some other lands), for protection after being attacked in Rome. The result was the coronation of Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans. The lands that Charlemagne controlled along with others evolved to become the Holy Roman Empire. This was abolished in 1806 to prevent Napoleon taking the title.

By the end of the Norman era and the start of the Middle ages, the Crusades, initiated by Pope Urban II, to rid the Holy Land of the Turks cost many of the Kingdoms of Europe including England much in terms of treasure and life. Indeed Richard I of

England, had the misfortune to be ship wrecked and fall into the hands of an opponent. A huge sum of money was paid by the country to set him free.

The Reformation and the advent of Protestantism ignited interference by states that sided with either the Pope or Protestantism. This, as in England, caused turmoil as successive Monarchs favoured one religious stance over another. In the late 17th century the Test Acts prevented Catholics from holding many public offices and these were not repealed until the early 19th century. Only in recent years has the English Monarch been allowed to marry a Catholic and because the Monarch is the supreme leader of the (Protestant) Church of England the Monarch cannot be a Catholic.

Controversial in modern times has been the relationship of Pope Pius II and the Nazi regime. Scholars have argued that Pius collaborated with Hitler because the Catholic Church has in the past had little sympathy for Jews because they killed Christ. Other sources however suggest that Pius was instrumental in helping Jews escape. Most agree however that Pius' main objective was to keep the Catholic Church intact.

Whilst religion and the state have generally gone their separate ways in

(Continued on page 37)

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so uplifted by a warm intermittent
breeze

that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house

and unlatch the door to the
canary's cage,

indeed, rip the little door from its
jamb,

a day when the cool brick paths

and the garden bursting with peonies
seemed so etched in sunlight

that you felt like taking
a hammer to the glass paperweight

on the living room end table,
releasing the inhabitants

from their snow-covered cottage
so they could walk out,

holding hands and squinting
into this larger dome of blue and
white,

well, today is just that kind of day.

(Continued from page 21) Topiarius

of weeks later scarified and spiked. If necessary, bare patches can be over
sown. I grow brassica in a netted frame and practice crop rotation of the veg-
etables so it is time to move the frame to a new position. I am never sure
when is the best time to work on ponds but find April reasonable for clearing
excess plant growth.●

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recognized

Derwen
College



Get set for the Derwen College - 10km Challenge 2026! Saturday, 18 April

On Saturday, 18 April, the college will host the event which sees participants tackle 10km in their own way to raise money for Derwen Charity.

Entrants can run, jog, walk, skip or wheel a scenic route which starts and finishes at the specialist college in north Shropshire, winding through local country roads along the way. This year's route also takes participants onto the college's new accessible sports track, which was developed thanks to the generosity of our charity supporters. Local runners, walkers and supporters are urged to sign up now to be part of this fun fundraiser. Participants will start from Derwen College's Gobowen campus site at 10am.

Entry is £12.50 including a medal and goodie bag.
Derwen Charity sports t-shirts available to buy separately
at sign-up and on the day.

Sign-in is from 8.30am–9.45am, followed by a group warm-up led by sports staff before the big countdown at 10am.

Dogs are welcome, and local running groups are encouraged to come along for a fun run. It's a friendly, no-pressure event, making it the perfect introduction to a 10km distance. A 6km option is also available.

Money raised will go to Derwen Charity, which provides extra experiences and opportunities for our students and clients to progress and thrive.

PARKING AND SHOPPING: There is plenty of free parking, and Derwen Marketplace will be open, offering refreshments, and shopping opportunities for participants and their families.

Derwen College Events Organiser Megan Charman says: "Nearly 200 walkers and runners took part in last year's 10km Challenge, raising almost £4,000 which went towards our new accessible sports track. It was a lovely sunny day where we were delighted to see so many people taking part, including run clubs and dog owners with their four-legged friends.

While we can't guarantee sunshine, we can promise a fantastic day that everyone can enjoy – whatever your fitness level or expected finish time. The real highlight is coming together as a community, getting active in the fresh air, and supporting a brilliant cause."

Find out more or sign up today at:

www.derwen.ac.uk/derwen-charity-10km-challenge/

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www.whittingtonmusicfestival.org.uk



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Whittington Music Festival comprises a series of five friendly and accessible concerts performed by a team of 18 internationally acclaimed artists - some young professional musicians in their twenties and some established stars.

On the 16th of May, we are excited to have Dr Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason joining us for the Family Concert alongside her son, violinist Braimah who has just been named one of Classic FM's Rising Stars for 2026.

A unique opportunity to see two members of this famous musical family here in North Shropshire!

See the full Festival programme at:

<https://www.whittingtonmusicfestival.org.uk/festival-programme/>

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From PCC Campion's latest newsletter:

Shortfall in Government funding leads to reduction in police officer numbers after ten years of growth.

My proposal to increase the council tax precept by 5.2% was backed unanimously by the police and crime panel on Friday 6 February.

By receiving backing from the panel, it will allow the Chief Constable and I to progress with our plans to deliver efficient and effective policing in West Mercia.

But to be clear, I do not want to increase council tax by the maximum, I simply have no other choice.

That's why I am continuing to call on the Government to recognise that central funding must keep up with the demand facing policing, rather than leaving you, the taxpayer, to cover the gap every year.

With the requirement lifted on total police officer numbers, the Chief Constable and I can use resources available to us more flexibly. This means 17 police officer posts will be removed.

However, officers currently in roles that are better suited to the skillset of police staff will move to frontline teams, which will see an 11% increase in neighbourhood policing.

As PCC, I remain committed to ensuring that you are kept safe and your police force is set up to deliver that.

The total budget for policing in 2026/27 will be £328.5m. Council taxpayers will pay an extra £15 per year (an average of 29p per week).

Paw-some care for police dogs recognised with accreditation

"The paw-some care for police dogs at West Mercia Police has been recognised for a seventh year with an accreditation from the Dogs Trust. Ensuring the care the four-legged officers receive is up to scratch, is the responsibility of PCC John Campion and his team. The PCC is therefore delighted to lead the way in announcing this latest accreditation from the Dogs Trust formally recognising the organisation under its Animal Welfare Scheme (AWS)." ●

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ROUND and ABOUT WEST FELTON

Your village magazine, delivered free every month

Supporting local businesses - supporting the community

MANY THANKS: The magazine committee is delighted to have been awarded a grant from the Parish Council in recognition of the importance to them of the magazine in disseminating their reports and events. We are very grateful for their consideration and are happy to support the council especially in the very busy time ahead with extra reporting on preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the extra work undertaken in regard to the many planning applications affecting West Felton. We all appreciate being kept fully informed.

ACCOUNTS: The magazine accounts have been audited and found to be in order. We managed a tiny surplus in 2025 thanks to the generosity of our readers' donations and a transfer from reserves.

ADVERTISING: Local advertising is in decline. Most new advertising is from businesses further afield, and mostly come to us through our web site.

PRICE INCREASE: It is our purpose to support local trades and businesses; every effort is made to keep our prices low. We are assured that they are extremely competitive when compared with other publications.

PRINTING - Our very cooperative and efficient printers have regretfully announced an increase in costs with effect from 1 March.

NEW NEWS: We have been approached by the Knockin & Kinnerley Cricket Club to publish notices of team events and schedules. They say many of their players are from West Felton and of course they are keen to attract new players of all ages. As a service to our existing and potential cricketers, this space will be free of charge as are all notices for charities and local groups.

VOLUNTEERS: Every month, twenty-six volunteers see that your magazine is delivered to more than 750 homes, on time, and before the first of the month where possible. Their commitment and reliability are outstanding. No claims are made for petrol or shoe leather! When a volunteer retires there is never a problem finding a replacement deliverer. West Felton people appreciate the information and entertainment provided and are keen to ensure that the magazine continues to thrive.

**Thank you to all our readers, volunteers and advertisers,
here's to an interesting 34th year! Colleen Hughes (Ed)**

The Punch Bowl Inn



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and Mark
welcome you!

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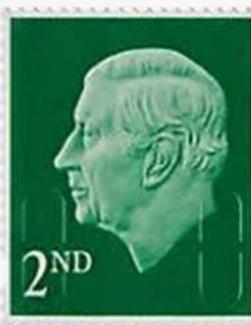
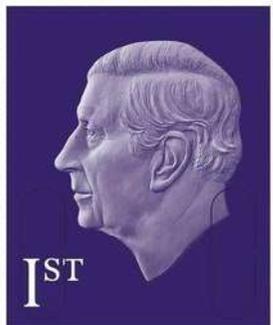
between 12 and 3pm.

Booking is advised.

For reservations call 07543 040618

**Royal Mail has announced that
stamp prices will increase
from April 7, 2026**

The price of a first-class stamp rises by 10p to £1.80
and second-class stamps increase by 4p to 91p.



don't
forget

IS MY BELOVED BARKING MAD?

I'm afraid so!

Anonymous

As a newish dog owner I feel I must apologise to my neighbours. (*you know who you are!*)

I need to work out what makes my lovely little dog feel he must alert me every time someone walks past the house. I need to learn to train him to relax, especially in the garden.

He does really like to 'talk'! He is lonely when I go out and excited when I get back - and tells me in no uncertain terms. He loves meeting new people and loudly tells them he is glad to see them. He lets me know when he is annoyed or happy, or wants me to play or go for a walk. Continuous doggy communication.

It's a bit like with little children, isn't it? What is cute, adorable even, in your own little darling, to others, well, perhaps not so much!

If anyone has any hints as to how I can persuade my beloved to stop telling the neighbours off, or perhaps he is inviting them in??

Anyway, it has to stop.

**Time in the garden is so precious for all of us
these tense days, we need peace and quiet,
birdsong maybe, but not barking.**

