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Citizens Advice Bureau, Castle View	03444 991100
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DIAL-A-RIDE, Volunteer Bureau and Qube Arts centre (main switchboard Osw.Community Action)	01691 656882
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	101
Oswestry Police Station	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
RSPCA Shropshire Branch	07703 567935
SAMARITANS	116 123
SCHOOL – West Felton C E School	01691 610388
SHOP: West Felton Stores	01691 610863
SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	0345 6789000
Anti-Social Report Line	0345 6789020
Shrops Councillor: Cllr David Walker	01743 256863/ 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

Year 33

JANUARY 2026

ROUND and ABOUT WEST FELTON

www.westfeltonmagazine.co.uk

Supporting local business - Supporting the community

Public Consultation

The Parish Council would like to hear your views
on how West Felton should develop.



Come and share your ideas for the
future development of West Felton. Come and
find out how you can be involved in writing our
Neighbourhood Plan for housing.

Saturday 17th January 2026
2pm West Felton Village Hall

Parish Council	Second Tues of the month, 7:30 School Hall
West Felton Walkers	10am Mondays, Punch Bowl EXCEPT...see page 13
Pilates Class	Tuesday mornings: 2 sessions: 9:30-10:30 & 10:45-11:45am Need to book online GYMATCH. Phone: Abi 07904456368
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 610336
Royal British Legion	INFORMAL MEETINGS 8pm Meeting, PUNCH BOWL first Monday of the month except Bank holidays then second Monday.

28th Dec	4pm CAROL SERVICE St Chad's, Haughton	
8th January	10-12 COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING	
17th January	2-4pm PARISH COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING	
28th February	7pm JACK DENT MAGIC ENTERTAINMENT Village Hall	

CAUTION

Look out for rogue traders

A householder in West Felton has recently been scammed by a man in a white pickup truck who falsely presented as someone who was expected to clean the gutters and se-

cure a loose tile. He spent a short time fixing the tile and then demanded £600 claiming he had cleaned the gutters. When the real cleaners turned up, they were really upset at the misrepresentation, and further annoyed to find the gutters had not been cleaned. The householder is distressed to have been treated so callously. One can see how this can happen when a genuine tradesman is expected, but we are reminded to **BE CAREFUL!**

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Round and About West Felton

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

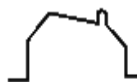
**Last day for submission of copy and
deadline for content changes
10th JANUARY 2026**

Editor: Colleen Hughes

Tel 01691 610300
colleenhughes748@btinternet.com

**Advertising Rates
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Quarter page £65
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Full page £155



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Christmas Eve Service with
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St Chad's, Haughton

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

Parish Office: 5 Newtown Gardens

Baschurch Shrewsbury SY4 2HF Tel 01939 262 881

Email: westfeltonpc@gmail.com Website: www.westfeltonparish.co.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

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS 10 March 2026

13 January 2026

14 April 2026

10 February 2026

12 May 2026

To Contact the Parish Council:

Clerk – Rosemary Wood – 01939 262881

Email: westfeltonpc@googlemail.com

Website Address - <https://www.westfeltonparish.co.uk>

Under the main heading 'Contacts' on first page

click on a named person

and you will be taken to an email contact form to write to them.

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Report from West Felton Parish Chairman, Cllr John Thornhill

Neighbourhood Plan public meeting

You will have seen from the front page of this edition that the Parish Council is inviting you to a public meeting in the Village Hall in January to discuss a proposed Neighbourhood Plan for West Felton. In previous issues I have set out the value of having such a plan for our parish, one of which is that it carries legal weight in deciding planning applications. It is a community-led document that provides a vision for future housing development in a local area, allowing residents to influence where new homes can be built. These plans are created by local communities rather than the planning authority and become

part of the Shropshire Council Local Plan. It is a requirement that non-council members are part of the Planning Team so if you are interested in being involved then please come along to the meeting and hear what is entailed and the time requirements for such involvement. Council has booked the Parish Hall for the public meeting on a Saturday afternoon 17th January 2026 at 2 00pm. This is your opportunity to influence the future of your village.

Equipment in Playground

We have been made aware that the 2 seater cradle in the first bay of the Tedsmore Lane play area needs immediate attention. We would ask that this equipment is

(Continued on page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

not used until it has been fully repaired. It has been taped off to prevent use.

Overgrown Hedges

A local resident has commented on social media as follows: "Just a little prompt not having a rant but hopefully someone might read this who can do something about it. We live in Weirbrook and have our 2 lovely granddaughters with us on various occasions, today being one. So decided go for a nice walk with the pram and one granddaughter but found the pavement between Weirbrook and West Felton in places unusable because it's overgrown so had to use the road making it dangerous with oncoming traffic. Maybe somebody in the council might see this and can see if anything can be done."

This matter was reported by the Council on 8 Aug 2025 on Fix my Street as follows: 'Hedge overgrown across pavement, including soil/vegetation that needs scraping off pavement. This is dangerous, as pedestrians have to step into the road in an area where national speed limit applies.'

However the system does not allow updates but our local Council-

lor, David Walker, has agreed to follow up this important issues.

Action Plan

The Parish Council discussed and updated the action plan to include the important topic of a Community Action project to improve better engagement with the community; creation of the Neighbourhood Plan; mapping of Tree Protection Orders to protect the greenery of the village; further action to deliver speed mitigation measures; enhancement of lighting on The Avenue; siting of signage to indicate the Conservation Area. Unfortunately the last three items are dependent on the involvement of Shropshire Council. Sadly, this has not been forthcoming so far but we will pursue these matters.

I attended the Christmas Fayre in the Village Hall. The array of crafts was of a very high standard. The coffee morning was a good introduction to the spirit and enjoyment of Christmas.

**May I wish you all
a very happy and joyful
Christmas and New Year
and confirm the determination of
the Parish Council
to continue to work for the good
of all parishioners.**

Annual property review

Are you curious about the value of your home?

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- Have you simply outgrown your home?
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Improved Performance on Potholes

I'm pleased to report that our efforts on road maintenance are showing progress. The performance on pothole repairs has improved significantly. 3,347 Outstanding repairs – down from 6,903 on 01/09

1457 Repaired by the new Pothole Team created in May. This is a direct result of better coordination and prioritisation, and it's encouraging to see tangible benefits for residents. Still a long way to go yet though.

Green Bin take up has improved significantly over last year

Grant Thornton Audit

The recent Grant Thornton audit has raised some important concerns for the 2024/25 financial year:

- * **Undelivered Savings:** Many savings targets have been missed in successive years, which continues to put pressure on our financial position. Many of the recommended savings from Price Waters Coopers were undeliverable had had not plan for implementation. Placing a significant strain on the budget
- * **Failings in financial monitoring and reporting,** failings which should have been addressed and made a direct contribution to the challenges facing the council.
- * **Failure to Address Previous Recommendations:** The audit notes that some recommendations from earlier reviews and have been flagged for six years.

Impact of Zero Per Cent Council Tax Rises

Six years of Council Tax freezes from 2010 to 2016 didn't cover inflation and led to a considerable decrease in income and the council sustainability. The accumulative impact means council tax income is £26.1m lower in 2025/26 than it would otherwise have been.

Period 7 Financial Position

Our latest financial update for Period 7 reflects these challenges. Pressures remain across several service areas, and while some mitigations are in place, the overall picture reinforces the need for decisive action to stabilise our finances. The worsening position from the previous month

Responding to the LGA Corporate Peer Review

The administration has moved quickly to address the findings of the recent LGA corporate peer review. Key steps include:

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

- * **Establishment of an Improvement Board** to oversee delivery and monitor progress.
- * **Development of an Improvement Plan** setting out clear priorities and timelines.
- * **Introduction of a People Plan** to support workforce development and organisational cultural change.

Planning and Local Development

Resources are being added to planning to improve the strategic direction of the service. A new Director of Place Shaping is being interviewed this week. This will replace several officers that were lost before the election.

Finally, I want to draw attention to significant announcements from government:

- * **Green Light for Planning Applications Near Railway Stations:** This policy aims to accelerate housing delivery in sustainable locations.
- * **Government to Decide Applications of 150 Dwellings or More:** This centralisation of decision-making will have implications for local autonomy.
- * **New Local Plan Framework:** The revised framework means our next Local Plan will not be in place until **March 2029**, creating a long period of uncertainty for planning policy. The government have extended the 30month period to include 4 months' notice of the council wanting to commence a new plan.

Over the last few days I have had significant case work around planning applications and flash flooding. More widely I am routinely visiting town and parish councils to discuss planning matters as portfolio holder, having strategic meetings with officers, landowners and or their agents. The call for sites has concluded but Shropshire Council is still welcoming late submissions for consideration.

In summary, while we face financial and governance challenges, there are clear actions underway to address them. At the same time, national policy changes are re-shaping our planning landscape, and we must prepare accordingly. ●

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Notification of Road Closure:

GRIMPO ROAD, WEST FELTON

Start Date: 2nd March 2026 - End Date: 2nd March 2026

Purpose: Road Closure - Pole Test

Works Promoter: Openreach

Works Promoter Ref: BC008PLT3158641830032025-01

**Enforcement pattern for Grimpo Road, West Felton:
9.30 - 15.30hrs**

You can view the closure and diversion route by clicking here:

<https://one.network/?tm=GB147172712>

Should you have any queries regarding this closure, please

call Customer Services on 0345 6789006,

or contact the Street Works Team

E: streetworks@shropshire.gov.uk

Notification of Road Closure -

HEATH HOUSES JUNCTION TO HARP FARM JUNCT WEST FELTON -

13th to 15th January 2026 - STW Ref 6737828

Purpose: Road Closure - New Water Connection

Works Promoter: Severn Trent Water

Works Promoter Ref: LB9225201-000006737828-01

Enforcement pattern for Unnamed road, Rednal, West Felton: All the time.

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17th October
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5th
December
Christmas
gifts

12th
February
Movie Night

5th March
World Book
Day

27th-29th
March
Easter Trail

27th March
Easter Raffle

6th June
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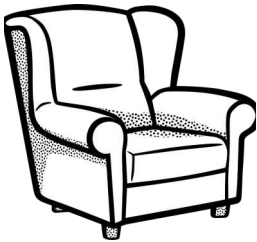


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sen destination for the away day
walk.

New members always welcome.

Walk leaders:-

Mike Bossen 01691 610623

Hilary Iles 01691 610707

John & Eileen Hanmer
01691 610629



**West Felton Christmas Tree 2025
Thanks to the Carnival Committee**

(Continued from page 41)

'A tarpaulin!'

'Apparently it's very popular with the children's ward, minister. They pretend they're camping.'

'No, it won't do! There must be a way of raising the funds somewhere!'

'Well ...'

'Yes?'

'Corporate Hospitality, minister. Awful lot of money in that. And novel hotel experiences. Very popular with the more adventurous tourist.'

'What do you mean?'

'We could turn the house into a sort of ... hotel, minister.'

'I don't follow.'

'The House, minister.'

'Now I know you're joking! You can't turn the Houses of Parliament into a hotel!'

'There are certain precedents, minister. It would be hugely popular and, I believe, would mean the house actually paid for itself.'

'But ... where would all the MPs go?'

'There are very cheap alternative accommodations further north, minister. The savings could be enormous, and the revenue raised ...'

'The speaker wouldn't like it.'

'Indeed, minister.'

'What a marvellous idea!'

'I'll draw up a proposal, minister.'

'Excellent. And perhaps in the new place we can get some better caterers. This lot are dreadful. Do you know, that beastly woman wouldn't let me have an extra spoonful of custard today?'

'Shocking, minister. Some people are just power mad.'

2012 Kay Lawrence.

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NEWS FROM THE CARNIVAL COMMITTEE

**Friday evening 28 November saw the grand switch-on
of the lights on the spectacular
Carnival-funded Christmas Tree with its
array of baubles bearing the names of the community.**

Another successful evening for the village, no rain and the moon shone brightly on us all.

A large crowd of people gathered to see the start of Christmas celebrations in West Felton, children came to look for their bauble shining brightly on the wonderful tree.

Mike Perry did the countdown and the lights came on with a great cheer from everyone.

Porthywaen Band played carols and folks drank mulled wine and had all sorts of wonderful cakes the committee and friends of the carnival had donated, a big thanks to everyone.

**With the sale of the baubles £300 was raised for the
Movement Centre based at the RJA Hospital.**

Thanks to all who attended and for their generous donations.
Thanks to all the carnival committee for such a wonderful job.

Happy New Year Everyone!

***New Year wishes
from the magazine Committee.***

In 2026...

May love and laughter light your days
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May good and faithful friends be yours
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YES, MINISTER

'What do you mean, we can't have the roof?'

'Just that, minister.'

'You mean, we have to find a cheaper option?'

'Not exactly, minister. We can't have one.'

'At all?'

'No minister.'

'Good gods, man! It's unthinkable!'

'I do understand, minister. But there is no money left.'

'Well, take some from one of the other projects. The Birmingham job, that had a huge budget.'

'All spent, minister. All our projects are, I'm afraid, overspent.'

'Good gods, who on earth permitted such woolly budgeting?'

'Minister?'

'Who was in charge of the budget on these projects?'

'Er, ultimately, minister?'

'Oh. I see, well, the Birmingham job will, of course, be a great legacy for the country.'

'Indeed, minister.'

'Well ... one of the other departments then. The DWP, they've been making substantial savings!'

'Not really, minister.'

'Oh come now! I read Clement's report. A 25% saving! They've clawed in a huge increase in contributions, raised retirement age. They must have quite a fund now.'

'They have made savings in pension payments, minister. Unfortunately administering the new deal has cost 111% more. They did actually approach us hoping we might have a little spare.'

'You're joking, surely?' 'I'm afraid not, minister.'

'Well, what are we to do? We can't have no roof!'

'Well, it does have a sort of roof.'

(Continued on page 43)

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West Felton Women's Institute

theWI
 INSPIRING WOMEN

West Felton WI continues to enjoy its many and varied activities. Recent doings have included a visit from Jan Morgan-Birtles of Minsterley who spoke about her journey in farming. The family's small herd of Jersey cows produces milk for their delicious ice cream and we sampled chocolate, stem ginger as well as vanilla. Their mixed breed pigs also benefit from the milk resulting in a range of sausages, bacon, burgers and meatballs (such as 'Black Velvet' with its pork, black pudding and Guinness – so good for you!) What a hardworking family with such a passion for their animals and for outstanding produce.

A consignment of quince brought another opportunity to develop culinary skills: quince paste has been duly made as well as quince jelly with rosewater – all delicious with cold meats, while for pudding adding some quince to apples made for a tasty crumble.

Members were entertained at Gobowen WI when they were treated to a performance by Shrewsbury's Gabriela La Foley with her ukulele-playing and warm wit. Others have taken part in an absorbing Christmas card-making workshop; while we didn't quite produce a boxful it has spurred us on to anticipate the season and all it brings. Items for Christmas boxes for the Teams4U annual appeal have been collected; there'll be carol services in Oswestry and Shrewsbury's Abbey for us to attend as well as our Christmas lunch at The Punch – thank you Sally in advance.

We are also regularly supporting Oswestry & Borders Food Bank following Liz Jermy's recent visit. Felton Stitch and our book club continue to thrive while a Carnival float get –together (still celebrating our win!) will be fun. Some of us are hoping to sample the menu on offer at the college's 'Scholars' restaurant and we'll attend the Attfield Theatre in early December for their staging of 'The Un-friend' which sounds darkly comic and something of a thriller.

Best wishes too to member Jo who we're sure will give a sparkling performance as she competes in Hope House's fundraiser 'Strictly Shropshire'.

Do 'give the WI a try'! Ring 07375 997782 if you would like to come along. We meet on the second Thursday of the month.

To all our friends and neighbours we wish a very

HAPPY
 New Year
 2026

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(Continued from page 35)

beard emerged, holding a cage with a jabbering parakeet inside. He held out his free hand to show he was otherwise unarmed, lowered the cage and backed away.

The officers emerged cautiously from behind their vehicles, edging towards the cage nervously. Mrs Withers, spotting her beloved parakeet, broke free from the officers and charged, a desperate bundle of netting, curlers and winceyette, back up the street.

'Get away from 'im! You b***** bullies!' she screamed.

The residents watched, horror struck, as curlers worked free from the hairnet and bounced down to the ground. Mrs Withers, oblivious to the police rifles trained upon her, burst through the cordon and launched herself at the cage.

'Oh ta, Tom! You saved 'im! Marvin, are you alright m'old love?'

Marvin, the bemused parakeet, hopped about on his perch and looked up at his mistress. 'Gonna blow you all up!' he piped up, cheerfully. 'Gotta bomb!'

The police inspector slapped his forehead. 'It was the sodding canary!'

'Parakeet!' corrected Mrs Withers.

'What the hell did you teach him to say that for?'

Mrs Withers looked up, startled. 'I never learned 'im that! 's not my fault. 'e likes CSI, that's all. It's 'is favourite show!'

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Up the Garden Path with Topiarius

New year, new enthusiasm for the gardening activities. However, in January things are largely at a standstill but it is a good time to apply lime to any vegetable plot that is rather acid and, in the reverse direction if your soil is on the alkaline side, to sprinkle sulphur chips on lime hating plants such as rhododendrons. A pleasant indoor job will be ordering plug plants of bedding, which we do for begonias, petunias and geraniums to reduce the work of producing from seed.

A generation or so back it was the almost universal practice to put the garden to bed in the autumn, clear, dig and forget until spring. Nowadays, some people keep up the tradition to clear their borders of dead vegetation in the autumn to give a nice tidy look. Others leave it all to spring so there are seeds for the birds and to give some protection to hibernating plants. We favour the autumn when we are less busy for the very simple reason that there is too much else to do in spring. I wonder whether the change owes as much to gardens being smaller as to care for wildlife. With the new year enthusiasm comes a desire to tidy up and we will start sweeping paths this month as well as any remaining border clearance.

As and when freezing temperature allow, we will be continuing with our winter renovation and change projects. However, one thing we won't be doing

is to make raised beds. I have never seen much point in them unless they are absolutely needed to get adequate drainage. I exclude from that comment what I consider as real raised beds which would be high enough to be tended from a wheelchair. One claim for them is to avoid walking on the soil but I want to grow rather more vegetables than in a bed I can tend from the side. That said, it does mean that our vegetable plots get walked on and we have not yet reached a totally no dig regime. When we do dig it disturbs the earthworms which I increasingly regret doing, but I don't suppose they can hear if I apologise. Actually, that is not quite true as they can feel vibrations. It was shown that if you play a sound that is like a mole digging they will scuttle back into their burrows.

While spreading soil conditioner, which is organic however you use the word, I was reminded of a very old quotation (but not where it came from): "Minerals that are mined or quarried cannot be said to be artificial and must not be spurned by gardeners, however naturalistic they have become." Back when that quote was made, organic still only meant carbon containing and had not been borrowed for use in a natural movement, so the minerals that were said to be natural would not be organic in the chemical sense.●

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(Continued from page 34)

'Madam, please keep moving! You need to get back.'

She turned a stare on the young officer that would have reduced a lesser man to jelly. 'Would you speak to your granny that way?'

'Madam, this is for your safety. Please. Keep moving.'

'What about my parakeet?'

Emily slipped her arm through Mrs Withers' and gently guided her along the street. 'I'm sure he'll be fine. They won't let you back in until ... whatever this is ... is finished.'

Mrs Withers looked up at her with teary eyes. 'I don't like to think of 'im, all alone up there.'

'Daft woman!' said Mr Hooper, taking her other arm.

They stopped at the end of the street, neither residents nor officers knowing quite where they should go now. Mr Hooper, appointing himself spokesperson for the displaced group, stepped forwards and tapped one of the officers on the shoulder.

'Now, see here. What's going on?'

The police officer peered down at

him coldly. 'Police operation, sir.'

Mr Hooper scowled. 'I can see that! Why have you turfed us out of our beds in the middle of the night?'

'I've been doing proper well learnin' him to talk, an' all,' grumbled Mrs Withers, still nursing her parakeet preoccupation.

'The building was evacuated for your safety, sir.'

'Is there a bomb?'

'I can't say, sir.'

'Mind you, I think he picks up more from the telly than he does from me.'

'For heaven's sake, woman! Shut up about your damned parakeet!' said Mr Hooper, throwing his hands in the air.

Mrs Withers backed away, staring at him in surprise. Emily put her arm around the old lady and gave her a squeeze. Back down the street the vested officers sprinted from the apartment block, and everyone ducked behind the emergency vehicles.

The residents and officers at the end of the street watched, open mouthed, as a young man with a

(Continued on page 37)

The Police Operation

'I heard one of 'em say it were a bomb!' said Mrs Withers, hairnet firmly in place, dressing gown buttoned protectively across her full length winceyette nightie.

'No, it'll be old Frank, again,' growled Mr Hooper. 'He's been on a bender, I'll bet.'

'I bloody 'aven't!' snarled Frank from the back of the crowd.

'Oh sorry, Frank. Didn't see you there!'

'It could be that young man from downstairs. I see he's grown a beard recently,' said Mrs Thomas.

'What the hell's that got to do with anything?' cried Mr Hooper, who was himself rather hirsute.

'Well, you know. He is at college after all,' insisted Mrs Thomas, looking around a little uncertainly.

'That's young Tom. Nice lad 'e is. Often calls in for a little chat. You leave 'im alone,' said Mrs Withers.

They all looked back at the apartment block, swimming in a seasick display of flashing red and blue lights. Swarming all around it were emergency workers in fluorescent yellow. The residents were all forced to shuffle backwards as the

cordon tape was stretched further out.

'It could be a gas leak,' said Emily Porter, shouting to make herself heard over the bedlam.

'Well, if that was the case young lady, they'd have the gas board out here by now,' said Mr Hooper kindly.

'I 'ope this don't take all night,' snapped Mrs Withers, sucking her gums worriedly. 'I had to leave m'parakeet in there. He don't like lots of noise.'

'He'd better hope it's not a bomb then!' snorted Frank, from the back.

Mrs Withers paled and began gurning furiously. 'D'you think they'd let me back in? Only I shouldn't like anything to 'appen to 'im.'

Three police officers approached at that point and began steering the bewildered residents down the street. Behind them a team of bullet-proof vested officers charged into the building. Mrs Withers stopped, craning her neck around the fluorescent jackets.

'Here! What about my parakeet? He'll be frightened stiff with all this lot goin' on!'

(Continued on page 35)

Why are they going to Church?

Michael Davie

By the time this article appears Christmas will almost be over. The festive season seems to start earlier each year and West Felton church must hold up its hand as an offender. The church held its biennial Christmas coffee morning on 22nd November and we would like to thank all helpers, stallholders and of course those who came and supported the event. Several attractions such as wreath making and Father Christmas have fallen by the wayside, but even so the total raised for the church was £805. Given that church roof repairs are currently ongoing and the heating is in disarray this sum is most helpful.

Seeing so many people enjoying a cup of tea or coffee and the various refreshments on offer gave me cause to think about the value of events such as this, and the community coffee mornings, in encouraging human contact. In recent months an increase in churchgoing amongst younger people, particularly amongst men in the 18-34 year-old group has been reported. The church claims a spiritual revival.

al. The Bible Society claims that people are looking for a meaning from life. Churchgoers were more likely than non churchgoers to report greater life satisfaction. Earlier articles in this series have sought to answer the question – why go to church? The findings, rather than spiritual regeneration, have highlighted loneliness and isolation whilst an excess of males in the revival has been stressed.

A recent article (in an economic publication) hints at a more serious problem. The story began when a single lady in her early twenties was heard to comment that men are nothing more than single celled organisms. She had not formed any romantic relationships and was setting out on a successful career. Men were a distraction to her lifestyle. She did however crave some relationship and she started to explore ChatGPT. Through this medium she sought to develop her ideal partner – probably a man –including his age and occupation. Chat GPT started telling her that loving her was his aim in life. Through this interaction with artificial intelligence she was finding satisfaction in her life. It

(Continued on page 25)

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(Continued from page 31) Shrops Directory

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As well as being available to the public on the Shropshire Council website, or via your chosen search engine, the Directory is used by Community and Care Co-ordinators, plus other health and care professionals as part of the NHS social prescribing service, which aims to help people take charge of their own health and wellbeing, and improve their lives.

The Directory can be found by following this link:

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It is possible to search the Directory using a keyword or phrase, plus a postcode in order to find the relevant services available near to where a user lives or works, and a search can also be narrowed further by 'audience', ie age group, or by a date range or day of the week. From the results of the search, users can access a variety of information about the groups, including contact details, a brief summary of the services provided, and where and when meetings / sessions take place. Where available there will also be a link to the organisation's website or social media for more in-depth information.

Please do have a look at the Directory and bookmark it as a 'favourite' for quick and easy reference, or if you are unable to access the internet at home, pop into your local library for assistance.

Lynn Ford, Community Directory Officer

December 2025

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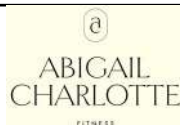
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(Continued from page 23) Why are they ...

gave her what she wanted and unlike real life partners it didn't cause her any problems. The relationship was simple, pleasurable and caused her no problems.

It appears that such a story is becoming increasingly common. Research has found that 42% of high school students in the USA report that they or a friend has interacted with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this way. People who use AI in this way may use it to find a (robotic) romantic partner, and may even develop a sexual relationship with it. Alleviation of loneliness is often cited as a reason for using AI in this way. Yet use of the computer and AI may actually cause loneliness and detachment from society. In the past a person might have gone along to the public library where a possible interaction with a librarian might have introduced that person to other ideas. The important point is that, like the lady above, we become attached to an artificial world which feeds its own thoughts and prejudices.

Running your social life around a computer risks inward thinking. The aforementioned lady is never likely to meet anyone with contra-

dictory views, and never likely to meet a boyfriend with whom she can argue, whom she can love and with whom she can have a physical relationship. Conversely a young man, whose desire is probably greater for a physical woman rather than an AI generated one gets to lose out. As in China with its one child policy, boys become frustrated at not being able to find a girlfriend. The more determined look to see where women are. Nightclubs and discos may be a source of girls, though at some risk such as drugs. The more discerning will discover that women are more likely to go to church than men, so where better for a young man to string along and find a girlfriend, especially in the more evangelical churches where the services can be more like a party than in a conventional Anglican church. Way back when I was at University, fellow students (all male in those days) spoke about the church and about the YMCA, as organisations that often introduced them to girls – "of a nice sort" – though I never got round to asking what that meant. There is evidently a rôle here for the church to fund better youth services, and bring people away from

(Continued on page 27)

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The Shropshire Together Community and Family Directory

If you haven't come across it yet ... the Shropshire Together Community and Family Directory is a free online database containing information about all sorts of local community groups, clubs, and organisations, covering Shropshire and the immediate bordering areas, as well as a few more regional and national sources of advice and support.

The Directory, which replaced the previous Shropshire Community Directory and Family Information Directory in April 2025, is provided by Shropshire Council, and currently hosts in excess of 5,000 entries.

The Directory offers signposting information on a vast range of subject areas, including:

- * advice and information, disability information;
- * business and economy, fund-raising and grant aid, charities;
- * care and support services, home care providers, day centres;
- * childcare and early years, child minders and nurseries;
- * climate, environment, composting and recycling;
- * community and living, community transport and venues, parish and community magazines;
- * education and learning, adult and further education, schools and tuition services;
- * employment and careers, jobs and job seeking;
- * family support, adoption and fostering support, parenting support, relationship advice;
- * health and wellbeing information, self-help groups;
- * housing and homelessness;
- * leisure and cultural activities, hobbies, art, drama, music, history, and heritage;

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(Continued from page 25) Why are they ...

their computers.

Many studies show that women have a warming effect on men, and in the presence of women men are more generous, talk more and take more risks.

Are these studies merely repeating what the author of the book of Genesis concluded over 4 millennia ago?

"Then God said 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper' ". Eve came along with the apple, Adam took a risk, and the rest is "history", or, more likely, fable. In getting the sexes together the church may have a role in enhancing interactions, promoting relationships and producing a more generous and calmer society as well as encouraging more marriages and children.●

ROUND and ABOUT WEST FELTON

West Felton Magazine Committee

Notice to Advertisers

We have kept our annual advertising increase, effective from 1st January 2026, to the bare minimum needed to cover the cost of printing.

In 2025 we only just broke even, thanks to the kind readers who made donations, and to the 26 volunteers who give freely of their time, effort and petrol to maintain deliveries.

We are very grateful to our donors, volunteers and contributors, and wish everyone a happy, peaceful and successful year in 2026.

*Happy
New Year*
2026

WEST FELTON VILLAGE MAGAZINE

FIRST ISSUE OF MONTHLY MAGAZINE
JULY 1992 25P

Contact Pat Mabe QH 400 to contribute articles.

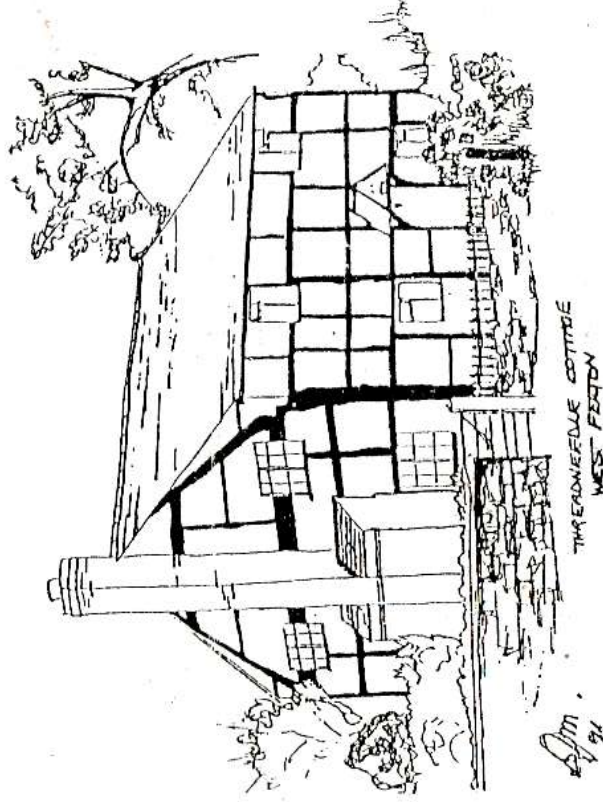
This is the first issue of a new magazine for the village of West Felton. This issue is a test run, if you like to establish if there is a market for a magazine just for you, the residents of West Felton. Its success will depend to a certain extent on your input. Any subjects that you have a particular interest in or you feel may be of interest to other villagers please write an article for inclusion. Events that you have planned for your organisation may be advertised in text or advertisement form. No longer will you have people coming after the event and saying "I would have come to that, if I had known it was on!"

As the village grows I have found, as a working mum, that I have lost touch with the village to some extent,

not going to the school, not being around for coffee mornings, etc. New residents to the village would welcome the information in a magazine so that they know what is available in the way of entertainment, sports activities, social get-togethers and much more besides. A magazine could be a useful way of passing that information round the village.

Please do not be shy, write something, suggests items, if you have any ideas at all give me a ring - this is your magazine and as such should reflect your interests, needs and aspirations for West Felton.

I would particularly like to hear from organisations such as WI, Feltonians, the British Legion, the school, pubs, the brownies, the Chapel - you will all have interesting news, things to say or announce. Please contribute and make this magazine a success.



January 2026, nearly 34 years later - well, I guess it was a success! It started off as four pages of A4 - now it is 56 pages of A5 and delivered FREE to more than 750 homes. Pat is still on the committee. Thanks also go to the Brooks family who made the transition to booklet form and produced the magazine for many years. (I have only been involved for 25 years! Ed.)