

FELSTED

# FOCUS

COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 26

SPRING 2025

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QUARTERLY



80

VE DAY

8 MAY 2025

INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

■ V E DAY - 8 MAY 2025

■ CLUBS

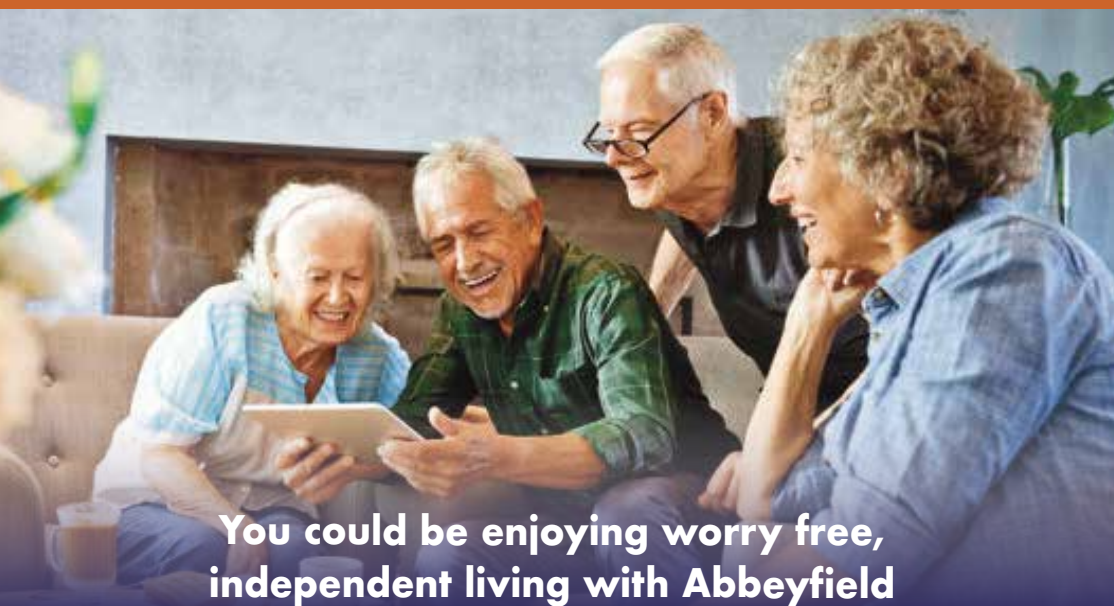
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■ EVENTS



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## Note from the Editor

This is the first FOCUS of 2025 and my last as editor. I will continue to be part of the team and I am delighted to hand the editorial seat to Hope Alexander.

In this issue we remember Felsted at war as the parish joins in commemorations of the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

It's not just the FOCUS that is changing in Felsted. The reorganisation of local government will bring changes to how our local services are run and the development in the north of the parish of a solar farm with over 200,000 panels will change our local landscape. We're covering both topics in this issue.

After 25 my issues of the mag, I just want to say a big thanks to all team and to those who have contributed. I'm delighted that Hope will be bringing a fresh eye to local events.

Don't forget, it's your magazine and it needs and welcomes your stories and contributions.

I will sign off with a big thank you!

*Janice*

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## Felsted Friendship Club



Andrew Wiltshire kindly stepped in at the last minute for our November meeting, to talk on Humorous Incidents Around the World. He regaled us with 101 true life and travel hassles he 'enjoyed' when working in 40 countries over 30 years.

We were again invited to Leez Priory for a Christmas luncheon on 3 December. We were warmly greeted and given welcome drinks before sitting at beautifully decorated tables. A lunch of turkey with all the trimmings was followed by Christmas pudding and we applauded the chefs and waiting staff for their work and kindness to us.

On 6 December, club members held their Christmas Party with a lunch cooked by Alice McLaren. The meal of chicken breast with trimmings followed by Christmas pudding was delicious. Alice and her staff were thanked for their hard work. Three's Company, a trio led by Jim Dwyer, entertained us playing and singing Christmas songs and some of the golden oldies, with members of the club joining in. Afterwards, gifts were handed out.

Our speaker in January was Bryan Thurlow on We'll Meet Again. He told us the interesting story of Billy Jackson from Bethnal Green, whose mother took in laundry and whose father was a milkman.

War was on the horizon in August '39 and Billy and his sister were sent to family on a farm in Suffolk. This was the period when it was said that it would 'all blow over by Christmas'. Their father joined the army, while their mother worked in a munitions factory. As there were no bombing raids, the children returned home. However, when bombing began in September they were advised to shelter under the stairs with saucepans on their heads when there was a raid on! Later, people were allowed to shelter in underground stations.

By November, the bombing raids had worsened, and the front of their house fell out after a hit. The children were sent back to Suffolk. Runways were being built nearby and they heard formations of bombers taking off in sixes and would count them back.

Their mother received a telegram to say that their father was missing, presumed dead. She never gave up hoping that he would return. At the end of the war they were given a new home, a prefab house.

## Felsted Friendship Club



On 21 February, Miss Frances Sparrow came to talk on History and the Weather. She began with October 1987 when Michael Fish, the weather forecaster, got it very wrong when he said there was nothing to worry about. Great swathes of woodland came down in the worst storm in 300 years.

At the time of the Wars of the Roses, Edward IV won the Battle of Towton, his soldiers having seen lights in the sky representing the Trinity, which was light reflected on ice crystals. The potato famine in Ireland was when the blight affected the potato harvest, brought about through incessant rain. Both Napoleon and Hitler did not take heed of the bad winters in Russia and their soldiers paid the price. The Mongols tried to conquer Japan but did not realise the ferocity of typhoons.

The weather affects everybody's lives and today we are even more aware of the changing weather patterns.

Sue King

### Future meetings

- 19 March – Cream tea at Felsted School
- 25 April – AGM with lunch and 'Zeppelins over Essex' by M. Lockwood
- 16 May – Havens Hospices Charity, Aron Lane
- 20 June – A quiet day at the airport, Mike Benning

If you are interested in coming along to one of our meetings, please contact Alison Moore on 01371 821632 or Sue King on 01371 821411. The Club usually meets every third Friday of each month in the Memorial Hall at 2.15pm.

Charity No 270264



## Felsted WI

Now that we have seen the last winter full moon, we can look forward to the coming spring, watching the snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils push through the cold earth to brighten our days.

Our WI members had a very cheery start to our February meeting. We were 'On a Roll' - the ladies rose to the challenge and donated lots of toilet rolls. These will soon be on their way to help out in Ukraine. They were collected by Mr Alan Hilliar who was recently awarded an MBE for his dedication and charitable work for Felsted Aid. This charity for deprived children is one we enthusiastically support.

The second delight of the year was to celebrate the long service of Marion Cook, who has been working tirelessly for the WI for fifty years. She is pictured here with Lindsey Barrell, herself a WI President (dressed in Burlesque attire with many funny stories to entertain us) and Moyra Jackson, the Federation Chair.

Why not come and join our happy group?

You are assured of a warm welcome! Please contact Penny Lewis for more information on 07825 312829.



## Felsted Royal British Legion



### George H Ebert DFC - Barry Atkinson

In this 80th year since VE Day our thoughts turn to those who gave their lives for our country during the second world war. One of these was a local man who, although born in Guildford in 1916, came to Felsted at a very young age when his father gained employment at Felsted School as a PT Instructor. They lived at Garnetts Villas, Felsted. George Ebert (who was always known as 'Harry') joined the Royal Air Force in 1934 qualifying as a fighter and later as a bomber pilot. Harry married Christina in April 1939 and they had one daughter Lesley who was born on 28 November 1943.

Harry was stationed at Hucknall near Nottingham and was a sergeant pilot with 98 (Bomber) squadron. In May 1940 Harry was posted to 142 squadron as a replacement pilot. On the 19 May he took off with two other planes in daylight to attack enemy positions west of Laon; none would return. The crews of the other two planes were killed or made PoWs. Harry was attacked and forced to land in Allied territory. Unusually his crashed plane was spotted by another pilot who called for assistance. His observer was wounded and taken to hospital and later died. Harry and his gunner Robert Utteridge were unhurt. Utteridge went on to win the DFM in June but became a PoW.

Harry was rescued and went on to fly four more missions from his base in France. In June 1940 he flew back to England with the remnants of the squadron. Harry was promoted to Flying Officer and served as an instructor with 207 Squadron flying Lancaster bombers.

On the night of 12/13 June 1943 Captain Flying Officer Ebert attacked Bochum in Germany, his plane was attacked by German ME 110 fighter planes, his crew returned fire and repulsed the attack and returned safely to his base. Harry was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and won his Distinguished Flying Cross in June of 1943.

Harry flew 23 operational sorties and died on 7 January 1944, and is buried at the Posnan Old Garrison Cemetery. Taking the place of another pilot who was unfit to fly, Harry was at the controls of Avro Lancaster ED586. He took off from RAF Spilsby in Lincolnshire just before midnight on January 1944. His aircraft was shot down at Stettin, which at the time was in Germany, and is now in Poland.

George 'Harry' Ebert's DFC was presented to his parents by His Majesty George VI on Friday March 23 1945, his campaign medals were sent to his wife Christina who was then living at 2 Garnetts Villas.

Harry's brother John lived in Oxney Villas, Felsted, and his sister (Joy Baker) owned the gracy shop in Bannister Green for many years.



FULL DETAILS  
ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE  
[WWW.FELSTEDCHURCH.ORG.UK](http://WWW.FELSTEDCHURCH.ORG.UK)

EASTER AT HOLY CROSS 2025



EASTER AT HOLY CROSS 2025

"EASTER HOPE MEANS  
WITH JESUS THE WORST THING  
IS NEVER THE LAST WORD"

Dear Friends,

I don't think Summer is quite here just yet, and as the old saying goes 'don't cast a clout until May is out,' so I wouldn't put your Winter woollies away too soon.

As previously mentioned in the last Focus Magazine, we started having a Church Breakfast at the latter part of last year, and as they were so successful and enjoyed by all those who came along, we are going to be continuing with them this year. The next breakfast will be held during the service on the 11 May, and we do hope you might like to join us (no charge applied).

Regarding our chosen charities for 2024, we were able to donate the sum of £500 to both Haven's Hospice and Hope House (homeless charity in Braintree).

At a recent Church Meeting we chose our charities to support for 2025. We decided to continue to support Haven's Hospice, and the second charity chosen was MIND – this charity gives advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem. The charity campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

We will be holding a number of events throughout the year to raise money for our church funds and our chosen charities. Please keep an eye out for posters advertising these events. We continue holding services every Sunday at 10.30am, with an occasional one being held at The Crix Green Mission.

The Women's Guild meets every Monday afternoon at 2pm between March and October. We have many speakers visit us, and we also have games afternoons, afternoon teas and fish and chip lunches.

Any queries please contact Diane 01376 583994

## Felsted Memorial Hall

Hello everyone!

Here at the hall it has been a very busy time with parties, Christmas fayre and regular bookings. Bookings have increased this year, too, despite us having to put our prices up to cover the cost of gas and electricity price increases.. I know it's difficult for groups to find the extra money, but in common with other community halls, we have no choice.

Apart from niggly problems like blocked toilets and broken locks, which have been sorted out, the hall ticks along nicely. We applied for a grant to install solar panels, but sadly were turned down this time because of the amount of applicants. There is more money out there to be had, so we won't give up!

The Panto was a riotous success, with so much positive feedback. We received an email from a lady that had never been before. Here is an excerpt from her message:

"It was a true testament to the dedication and passion of everyone involved, and it was a delight to experience. It's not often you come across something as special as this anymore. With so many amateur dramatic groups sadly disappearing, it was a real pleasure to see such a vibrant and thriving community production. What made it even more inspiring was the inclusive spirit of the show, celebrating the talents of all involved and highlighting the joy that theatre brings to everyone regardless of ability. The enthusiasm and energy that radiated from the stage were infectious, my family and I enjoyed every moment."

What wonderful comments! And that was only part of it. We were so encouraged that all our efforts were worthwhile. For those of you that couldn't make it, you missed a great evening out. The final profit made was just over £3,000, all to be ploughed back into the hall. We have plans for other events throughout the year, so watch out for information on our website.

We are looking forward to summer now, so stay well.

We'll chat very soon, hopefully, on a hot summer day! .

Hazel Fox



Dunmow u3a is part of a UK-wide movement of local member-led interest groups that provide a wide range of opportunities to come together to learn for fun.

It is aimed at adults in Dunmow and the surrounding villages who are no longer in full time employment and have an interest in all things new: hobbies, challenges, sports or just making new friends.

Our member-led interest groups include:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Art              | ■ Line Dancing         |
| ■ Book Clubs       | ■ Luncheon Clubs       |
| ■ Bridge           | ■ Mah Jong             |
| ■ Canasta          | ■ Music Appreciation   |
| ■ Cribbage         | ■ Nature Walks         |
| ■ Cycling          | ■ Pickleball           |
| ■ Family History   | ■ Quilting & Stitching |
| ■ Flower Arranging | ■ Science & Society    |
| ■ French           | ■ Scrabble             |
| ■ Garden Visits    | ■ Sequence (the game)  |
| ■ General Crafts   | ■ Table Tennis         |
| ■ Geology          | ■ Walking              |
| ■ Golf             | ■ Whist                |
| ■ Grow Your Own    | ■ Wine Appreciation    |
| ■ Italian          | ■ Wool & Waffle        |

To find out more, explore our website [www.dunmow.u3asite.uk](http://www.dunmow.u3asite.uk)  
email: [membership@dunmowu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@dunmowu3a.org.uk) or visit our facebook page  
(search for "Dunmow u3a") · Registered charity number: 1168310



## Recipe: Success Torte

This cake is made in Scandinavian countries and is traditionally served at celebrations (a Swedish furniture outlet famously serves it in its restaurants). The beauty of this cake is that it can be made in advance and benefits from being served chilled wherein the meringue absorbs moisture which alters its texture.

### Ingredients

#### Meringue

4 egg whites  
4oz / 115g caster sugar  
4oz / 115g ground almonds  
Pinch of salt  
Optional: 1tsp / 15ml almond and vanilla essence, to taste  
Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F)

#### Patisserie cream

4 egg yolks  
1oz / 30g cornflour  
2 ½oz / 65g caster sugar  
12fl oz / 350ml whole milk  
3oz / 85g unsalted butter, softened  
1 tsp / 5ml vanilla essence  
Pinch of salt

### To decorate

1-2 Daim bars (28g each) crushed or chopped Dark chocolate (grated or melted)

### For the patisserie cream

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar until they turn a pale gold colour. Whisk in the flour and cornflour and set aside.
2. Place the milk and vanilla essence in a heavy-bottomed saucepan, bring to a gentle simmer, stirring frequently. Remove the pan from the heat and let cool for 30 seconds.
3. Slowly pour half of the hot milk onto the egg mixture, whisking all the time, then return the mixture to the remaining milk in the pan. It is important to slowly pour the hot milk onto the cold eggs before you return the mixture to the pan to prevent the eggs from scrambling.
4. Bring the mixture back to the boil and simmer for one minute, whisking continuously, or until smooth.
5. Stir in the butter.
6. Pour the cream into a clean bowl and cover with a sheet of clingfilm (touching the cream-to prevent a skin forming). Cool as quickly as possible, by sitting the bowl of pastry cream in another larger bowl of ice cold water. When cooled, refrigerate until needed.



### For the meringue

1. Line the bottom of two 6-8in / 15-20cm sandwich tins.
2. In a mixing bowl, whip whites to soft peaks. Gradually add sugar while whipping to make meringue.
3. Gently fold in the two essences, taking care not to knock out the air.
4. Divide the mixture between the two sandwich tins, spreading to form an even layer.
5. Bake the meringues for 20 to 25 minutes, or until golden brown.
6. Cool for 10 minutes before loosening from the edges with a knife and turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely. Gently remove the lining paper when cold.

### To assemble the cake

Sandwich the two meringue layers together with the cream. Flat ice the cake with a generous amount of cream. (Any leftover cream can be used for other recipes.) Sprinkle with crushed Daim bar(s), and drizzle/sprinkle with the melted or grated chocolate. Chill completely for two hours before serving. The cake be frozen whole or in slices; defrost slices for 10- 15 minutes.



### Woodleys car park

The parish council (PC) is aware of a number of cars staying beyond the permitted 24 hour parking restriction in the PC-owned car park in the centre of the parish. These spaces are needed for residents wishing to visit the shops, church etc. The council has therefore decided that cars staying in contravention of the parking restriction will in future be removed by a parking enforcement company. Clear signage to this effect will be erected in the car park.

### Almshouses layby

Residents are requested not to park in this layby but to leave it clear for the residents of the almshouses and emergency vehicles only.

### New footpath

ECC Highways has installed a new footpath at the junction of Braintree Road and Jollyboys Lane North. This connects the pavement to the bus stop making the area much easier for pedestrians to navigate. This work was originally suggested to the council by a Felsted resident and follows a subsequent application to the Uttlesford Local Highways Panel. The PC is delighted to see this work completed and hope that it makes it easier for residents to access the bus stop.

### Book box - Chaffix

This has been looking rather neglected and untidy of late. The PC would like to know if it is still being used by the community. Please would you either email, call or text the Clerk if this is a facility that you use. If, as is hoped, the book box is still a much-loved community resource the PC would like to hear from any resident who would be willing to keep an eye on the book box and give it the occasional tidy up. Please contact the Clerk if you would be willing to take on this role.

### Return of the green waste collection service

The PC is once again funding Uttlesford District Council's green waste collection service. Commencing on Sunday 2 March, the service will run until Sunday 30 November inclusive. Collections will take place between 8.30 – 9.30am.



### VE Day 80th anniversary - a shared moment of celebration



VE Day 1945 marked the end of the war in Europe. The 80th anniversary of this remarkable day takes place on Thursday 8 May 2025.

To commemorate / celebrate this event the Felsted Beacon (along with vast numbers of beacons throughout the United Kingdom) will be lit at 9.30pm on the main playing field. All are welcome to come along to mark this historic occasion.

### News updates

Residents are encouraged to sign up to receive up to date Parish Council news by registering for updates on the PC website [www.felsted-pc.gov.uk](http://www.felsted-pc.gov.uk). Enter your email address to receive automatic notifications by email of all news articles as they are posted on the website.

Heather Read Clerk to the Parish Council  
Phone: 07719 552174 Email: [clerk@felsted-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@felsted-pc.gov.uk)



## Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (FNPR) update

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As we reported in December 2023, the parish established a Review Group to review our Neighbourhood Plan passed in February 2020 and to see how best to deal with a new housing allocation.

This year, the original 2020 Neighbourhood Plan will deliver a brand new doctors' surgery to be owned by the Felsted Community Trust and a new 90-space car park for our Primary School to alleviate traffic congestion at Watch House Green. This proves that it is worth the community's time and effort in deciding the location of new housing which, once allocated by Uttlesford District Council (UDC), will materialise whether we engage in the process or not!

None of us want any more development, but that isn't an option open to us. In its new Local Plan, (now with the Planning Inspectorate) UDC has allocated a further 104 new homes to be built in Felsted between now and 2041.

As in 2020, we can either choose to allocate sites we prefer for development, and which might produce some accompanying community benefit, or we do nothing and leave it to developers to choose where they want to build. We want to choose.

The way we do this is determined by a statutory process set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

We held our first consultation event in March 2024 where we asked you for your comments on sites put forward to UDC for development by landowners. Since then, we have been carefully assessing those sites and speaking with landowners to determine which offer the best outcomes for the parish.

Another benefit of engaging in the process is to gain support from landowners / developers for a housing 'mix' that reflects the needs of our community (which is why last year we commissioned a 'Housing Needs Survey'). This encourages them to deliver more smaller homes and even some bungalows, instead of always building the more profitable executive homes they favour.

We were well advanced with our review and were ready to propose allocated sites for the 104 new homes and intended, in late March, to invite the parish to what's known as a Regulation 14 consultation. (We'd even booked the Memorial Hall). This is an event where the Review Group and the Parish Council:

## Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (FNPR) update

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- i) Publicise, and to bring details of the proposals to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the Felsted area;
- ii) Give details of where and when the proposals plan may be inspected;
- iii) Give details of how to make representations;
- iv) Specify the date by which those representations must be received, (being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised).

The Review Group also has to consult any consultation body whose interests may be affected by the proposals (e.g. Essex County Council) and send a copy of the proposals to the local planning authority (UDC).

At a recent meeting with UDC, they advised us that our proposed plans should be subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - Regulation 12(2) - before we could hold the Regulation 14 consultation with residents. However, this is complex work that requires expertise that we don't have in the parish and is beyond the capacity of the Review Group.

In plain terms, the SEA is a report that identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the review and identifies reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the review.

The process first requires a scoping study to establish what the SEA should look at. UDC are being very helpful to us by assisting us to produce the scoping study and that should be completed in about four weeks.

When the scoping study is complete, we need the SEA to be conducted by a professional consultancy. This also takes time and is a costly process. We can get a grant from government (an agency called Locality) to fund it but, unfortunately, funding is not now available until June!

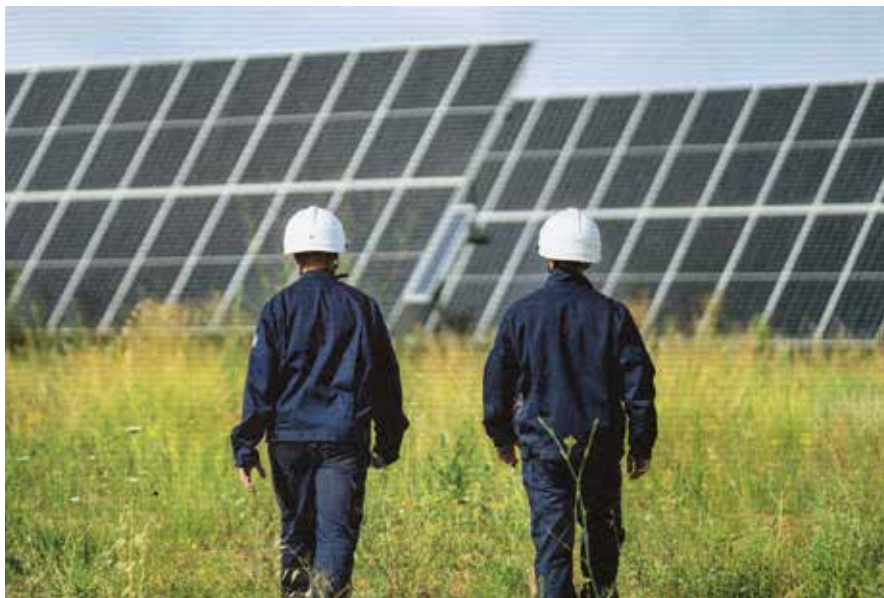
The outcome of all this is that we are unlikely to be able to share our plans with you until the summer. We're very sorry about the delay, but we are completely in the hands of others in navigating this process.

## Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (FNPR) update

We will keep you informed of progress through the FOCUS and the parish website.

The Review Group.

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### Planning application for a major solar farm in the north of the parish.

Whilst writing, and just in case some of you are not aware, the Review Group would like to draw your attention to the planning applications that have been made for major solar farms in the northeast of the parish. If successful, the Hedgehog and Willows Green solar farms will cover more than 15% - yes 15% - of the area of Felsted!

The Willows Green farm – over 280 acres – already has approval. The Hedgehog Farm is so large – over 650 acres with more than 200,000 panels, it is classified as a National Infrastructure Project and any decision to approve it will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero. The usual planning process does not apply and residents' opportunity to object is restricted.

The Parish Council will object and will also challenge UDC's housing allocation with the Planning Inspectorate as a consequence of this additional development and loss of farmland.

## Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (FNPR) update



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## Celebrating Our School's Vibrant Learning Community

It's been an exciting term for everyone at our school, with lots of wonderful events and achievements of our children. We pride ourselves on our consistent behaviour approach and fostering an environment that encourages creative and critical thinking. Our recent peer review from two local headteachers highlighted our strengths, affirming our dedication to providing high-quality education.

One of the most exciting events was the visit from the Wonderdome planetarium for all our children. The excitement was palpable as they engaged with the fascinating world of space and science. It's always lovely to see our children embrace these opportunities to learn and discover together. Science has been a focus for us this year and this was a great way to engage and inspire the children.

The hustle and bustle of our annual art exhibition was another highlight of the term. This year, our young artists truly outdid themselves, presenting their work with immense pride and enthusiasm. The hall was adorned with an array of colours and creativity, allowing parents and families to savour the talent and hard work of our budding artists. Witnessing the joy on children's faces as they showcased their creations to their families was truly uplifting.

The whole school also gathered for our vibrant Spring Music Concert, themed around colours. The atmosphere was and filled with positive energy as children from all year groups performed. Each performance was a delightful celebration of individuality and teamwork, wrapping us all in a warm embrace of musical talent and community spirit.



Furthermore, our Eco and Owl Week, centred on British wildlife, proved to be an educational adventure for all. Children embarked on local walks, exploring the beauty of our natural surroundings. They created highly informative presentations about various animals, delving into their habitats and behaviours. It was fantastic to see the children engaging with nature in such a hands-on manner, fostering a deeper understanding of the environment and wildlife conservation.



As we continue our journey through this academic year, we remain committed to nurturing our children's talents and passions. It's clear that our dedicated teaching approaches, combined with the enthusiasm and imagination of our children, create a vibrant learning community that we're all immensely proud to be a part of. Here's to many more exciting adventures ahead!

Bryony Collins

## Felsted in WW2

### Defence and D-Day

In May 1940, as British soldiers were evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk, the boys of Felsted School were evacuated to Herefordshire. The school buildings were taken over by the army, becoming the Sector Headquarters for XI Corps who had responsibility for the defence of Essex and Suffolk. XI Corps' badge of a chequered castle tower is believed to symbolise the numerous pillboxes and defensive strong points constructed by the corps in its anti-invasion role.



Essex and Suffolk. XI Corps' badge

This area was on the GHQ stop line, one of many boundaries identified to halt any advance of an invading German army. The River Chelmer offered a natural anti-tank defence, and pill boxes were built in the fields of Ford End, Barnston and Great Dunmow facing the parishes of Felsted and Little Dunmow, to which the army could retreat.

Field Marshall 'Monty' Montgomery arrived at Felsted School in the spring of 1944 to hold a high-level conference attended by senior officers, codenamed BREAKER IV. This was the forerunner BREAKER V, held at Monty's old school St Paul's, which was the final briefing before the D-Day Landings.

Monty arrived in Felsted in an open top staff car flanked by outriders. He swept through the village and into the school grounds, enjoying a pre-briefing sandwich whilst sitting on the car's running board, parked on the cricket field.



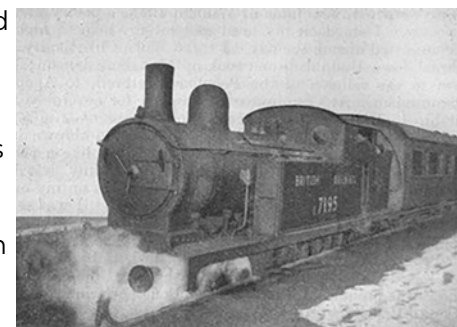
Field Mashall 'Monty' Montgomery



## Felsted in WW2

### Flitch railway line

The Braintree to Bishops Stortford railway branch line played an important operational role during World War II when it carried more freight than in all its previous history. In 1942, it was used to transport thousands of tons of rubble for the construction of Great Saling airfield (now Andrewsfield). The airfield was one of eight airfields in Essex built by USAAF 819th Aviation Engineer Battalion. Part of the work included re-constructing the small lane to Great Saling to allow heavy vehicles access to the site from the main Braintree to Dunmow road.



Constuction of Andrewsfield air Base



RAF Andrewsfield air Base

## Felsted in WW2

After the airfield became operational, enormous loads of bombs and munitions were carried there under cover of darkness via the railway. USAAF bases at Stansted and Easton Lodge were also regularly supplied with armaments and stores via Bishops Stortford and Takeley stations.



Trains were often machine gunned by the Luftwaffe and attempts to bomb the ammunition trains were made on several occasions.

After the invasion of Europe in June 1944, the line was used by specially built ambulance trains to bring back wounded servicemen via the Port of Harwich to the military hospitals at Bishops Stortford and Black Notley.



## VE DAY - 1945



1939 - 1945



## DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' CORNER

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM – WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT THEN, JOHN?

Well - a very fair question and does it have any relevance for our residents here in Felsted?

To be truthful, how local councils are organised is a bit of a specialist subject and not one which is likely to be asked in a Pub Quiz! However, it is a topic which residents will want to know more about since in the future, Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council will be swept away through the Government's recently announced plans to reorganise these types of local authorities. It wasn't a policy expressly included by the Labour Government in their pre-election manifesto – there were general references to 'local government devolution' but the scale of the changes now proposed, which will be the greatest to happen in 50 years, was not referred to. None of us will have a vote on whether we approve of these changes, but make no mistake they are coming.

It means that a Mayoral Authority will be set up from May 2027 covering Essex as a whole. The elected Mayor will be responsible for strategic matters like roads, large new communities and major infrastructure, as well as Police and the Fire Service. Elections for this new post will be held in May 2026.

Anyway, the Elections for Essex County Councillors, which were scheduled this May, will now be cancelled but our current county members will continue in post until May 2028 when the County Council will be scrapped. Uttlesford District Council (UDC), and all other District Councils in Essex, will also be swept aside and new 'unitary' councils established in their place. These will take over the education and social care functions currently provided by Essex County Council as well as the existing functions of the District Councils (e.g. refuse, planning permissions, social housing). UDC will be obliged to combine with some of its neighbours to achieve a combined – unitary – authority which will represent larger population numbers than at present, perhaps in our case 300,000 people.

We do not know how the re-mix will end up, but the betting money is going on UDC joining up with Epping Forest and Harlow Councils. We won't know if all this will come about until the data and possible combinations have been analysed by Government

## DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' CORNER

later this Autumn who will then decide on the final arrangements. There will be no vote or Referendum of the Electorate on this all - I can hear us all protesting now at this lack of democracy!

However, the current District Councils will overlap with the new unitaries, with UDC and its councillors likely to continue in place until May 2028 when the new unitaries will come into formal existence. Elections to those new bodies will be held in May 2027. So, between May 2027 and the following year, the new unitaries will be operating in 'shadow' mode.

All this reorganisation will be very expensive in the short term, but the Government believes that there will be cost savings in the long run. They certainly also believe that it will make it easier for them to drive through the 1.5 million increase in housing that we constantly hear about. As to extra costs though, at UDC, we have just had to include in the 2025/26 Council Tax Budget the sum of close to £3 million to meet prospective reorganisation costs.

So, while we are being forced down this council reorganisation road, I believe it will also ultimately mean reduced effective local representation for residents than is the present case. We don't know exactly what will happen but the current 39 District and 5 County Councillors representing Uttlesford residents will be replaced by (say) 15 Councillors elected to the new unitary. There would be a further 45 or so Councillors elected from elsewhere. So, there would be a watering down of local representation, as I see it, with inevitably, a reduced level of Councillor awareness of some local/grass-root concerns and issues.

It's not all change though – the good news is that Parish Councils are not affected by these plans. In fact, I would hope that they will take up for themselves a bigger and better funded role within their communities after this imposed reorganisation of the local government deckchairs has taken place.

*John Evans*

District Councillor  
E: [cillevans@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:cillevans@uttlesford.gov.uk)

## The Hundred Parishes

Late 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps record the location of numerous ponds in farmland across lowland England, but since then farming practices have changed and many have disappeared.

Well-maintained ponds are hot spots for biodiversity, supporting special plants and animals. Responding to concerns about the loss of such habitats, researchers at the Pond Restoration Research Group at University College London joined forces with others to investigate the potential for restoring such lost ponds and produced advice about the best ways to create new ones.

Following on from this, Essex Wildlife Trust identified 17,200 Essex farmland ponds on these old maps but noted that 10,400 had since disappeared. A few have been restored, and the team is working with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group to secure funding to help more farmers reinstate their lost ponds - <https://www.fwageast.org.uk/ponds>

However, pond restoration can be challenging - as evidenced by the difficulties faced during the project to resolve problems with Doctor's Pond in Great Dunmow. In recent years it has been polluted by toxic blue green algal growth. Ambitious and costly plans were drawn up to desilt the pond which necessitated the safe removal of fish so they could be returned in due course. Work commenced last October with the installation of safety fencing and the draining of water so that a digger could be used to help remove over 1,900 tons of contaminated silt. Heavy rains made the silt very slippery, and the digger became stranded in January. By the end of February all the silt had been removed.

Future plans include landscaping of the surrounding area and replanting with suitable vegetation once the pond is refilled. It is anticipated that in the coming months this attractive pond will once again provide a great habitat for ducks, fish and dragonflies.

Ken McDonald,  
Secretary



Doctor's Pond, Great Dunmow,  
February 2025

## The Hundred Parishes



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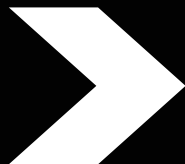
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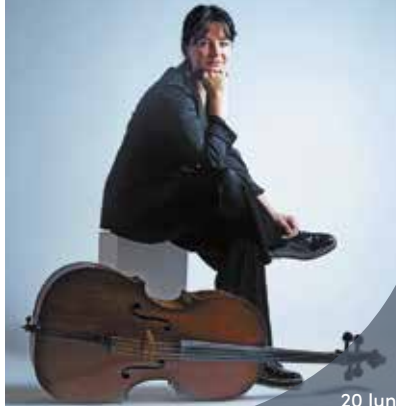
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