

Faversham Society Newsletter

July 2022

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A kingfisher watches over Westbrook. The stream's guardians have received a top honour

See pages 10-11

Image by Bob Gomes

From the chairman

HAROLD GOODWIN

As I write this, work on the second-hand bookshop is drawing to a close, and the move is likely to take place soon.

Moving our visitor information centre and shop to 12 Market Place has substantially increased the prominence of the Faversham Society in the town and increased footfall. We benefit from being at the entrance to the Faversham Charters exhibition, and our volunteers are working harmoniously with those stewarding the exhibition.

At the AGM there were talks by David Rundle and Angela Websdale. David Rundle is a lecturer in Latin and manuscript studies in the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent. He is a Renaissance historian and a

palaeographer and is very interested in the Faversham Charters. We are working with him and the town council to engage graduate students in research into Faversham's history.

Angela Websdale is a Faversham resident and mature PhD student at the University of Kent, researching the cult of St Edward the Confessor and its presence at Faversham, Kent. Her talk on the wall paintings in the Becket chapel behind the organ in St Mary of Charity linked Faversham with the Westminster cult of the Confessor. We shall hear more from Angela about the Thomas Becket once she has submitted her thesis.

St Mary On 16 July, Jonathan Carey will be talking about the way the St Mary of Charity Church has evolved through centuries. See page 6.



Diamond year This is our 60th anniversary year and on 21 May, our president, Richard Oldfield, hosted a tea party at Doddington Place Gardens for our volunteers and cut an anniversary cake. Votes of thanks were made to Richard and those who organised the tea party. Our volunteers were able to enjoy the splendid gardens. See the pictures on this page.

In October we are planning two days of celebration for our members at the Alexander Centre. Details to follow but the dates for your diary are 25 and 26 October.

Anchoress On Saturday, 9 July, the Church of St Mary of Charity, Faversham, will host Georgina Lock's solo show, *The Walled-Up Woman*, which she performs in the character of a medieval anchoress.

Anchoresses were laywomen who chose lifelong lone lockdown, usually in a lean-to on the north wall of a church. A bishop

approved successful applicants and ceremonially walled them into their cells or "anchor houses". Living on donations as "anchors of the church", following the guidebook for anchoresses, *The Ancrene Wisse*, they prayed for souls – living and dead. Their practical tasks were to sew and to dig their graves in their cells so that, buried close to the altar, they would bypass purgatory and marry Christ in heaven.

Before the English Reformation, when the practice was ended, anchoresses were surprisingly plentiful.



St Mary's in Faversham was home to four anchoresses and one anchorite, who had been the church's priest.

Georgina (left), a writer-director, actress and filmmaker,

researched and wrote

the script before lockdown when the show came into its own on Zoom to international audiences. She is delighted to be performing *The Walled-Up Woman* at the beautiful medieval church of St Mary of Charity whose anchoresses inspired the piece. Entry is by donation to the friends. Doors open at 7pm.

AGM The annual meeting at the Alexander Centre on 1 June attracted a good turnout. Jackie Davidson and Jane Secker were elected to the board. Procedural errors were made in the administration of the AGM, which we explained to the 73 members present and decided to proceed with the meeting. On behalf of the board, vice-chairman David Melville wrote to the Charity Commission accounting for our errors, for which I add my personal apology. See page 9.



Royal display

HEATHER WOOTTON

I hope you all had the opportunity to visit the Town Hall exhibition space (next to the new Visitor Information Centre at 12 Market Place) recently to see images of items from the Fleur de Lis Museum.

The title was *Let's Have a Right Royal Knees-up* and the focus was to show how Faversham and its surrounding villages celebrated previous royal jubilees, showing many photographs and images of several programmes and memorabilia.

The event lasted from 30 May to 12 June. We found many interesting items in our archives and stores. In the picture above, you can (centre, left) see a yellow square that is a handkerchief from the Queen's coronation in 1953 in almost pristine condition!

Many thanks to Rachel Baynham (and Kit) for arranging this exhibition. Thanks also go to those who contributed to the donation jar.

The pit at Queen Court Farm near the end of the dig spring 2022. The flint layer is visible in the wall of the pit and the flint feature can be seen at the bottom of the pit



Archaeology update

LESLEY SHEA & NICK WILKINSON

Members of the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group (FSARG) were again granted permission to dig at Queen Court Farm, Ospringe this spring. It is unusual for us to excavate in the spring as this session is traditionally used to prepare for our longer, summer season. This year, however, we had questions to answer at Queen Court before we could plan for later work.

The Manor of Ospringe is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and we have been looking for signs of use of this site before the buildings now there. Parts of the house have been dated to 1500 with suggested dates for other elements ranging from the 1600s to early 1800s.

Pat Reid explained the work we did at Queen Court last summer in the October 2021 Newsletter and full results are available at favershamcommunityarchaeology.org. In both of the two pits we opened last summer we found a surface of crushed

chalk. Although these appeared similar in the two pits the (rather sparse) dating evidence suggested different dates for each of them. Our main aim in spring 2022 was to find out if these two chalk surfaces were part of a single feature – which the geophysical ground survey results suggested was possible.

Thus, in May we opened another pit, measuring 3m by 2m, in the front garden of Queen Court Farm. The pit was dug between the two excavations carried out last year and with reference to the geophysical survey results.

We found an initial flint surface which was likely to be the feature picked up by the survey, but we did not find a surface of crushed chalk that connected the two pits from 2021. We identified several layers showing different activities and then, in true Time Team fashion, an interesting feature was uncovered just before the end of the exercise. The feature, which was found at almost our maximum safe excavating depth, was a collection of

impacted flints that are not naturally occurring – see the accompanying photograph.

We will be returning to Queen Court in the summer to investigate this pit and the surrounding area further and a full analysis of the finds from spring and summer will be carried out later in the year.

Meanwhile, a survey of the back garden at Queen Court shows some features potentially worthy of investigation ...

Our thanks go to the landowners: we really appreciate their support and enthusiasm.

Faversham's gallows

HELEN PERCIVAL

In the last issue, Michael Sanders asked for information regarding the location of the gallows in Faversham.

He is correct about it being at the junction of St Ann's Road, Lower Road, South Road and Ospringe Road.

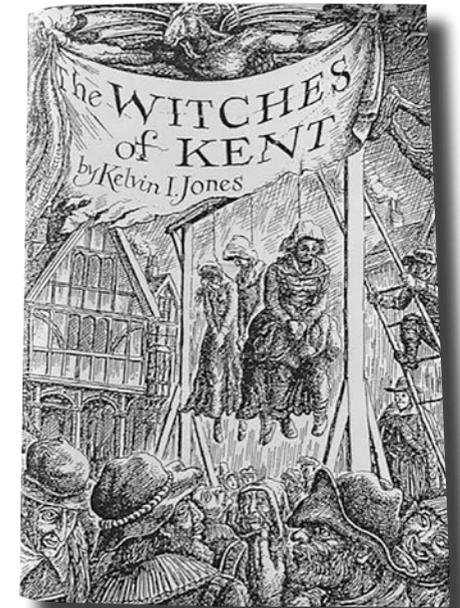
However, the layout of these roads has changed since the gallows was there. If Michael looks at the map of Faversham from Edward Jacob's History of Faversham, he will be able to see this for himself (the map can be seen online).

The four roads met at the centre of a sort of X-shaped layout, and this was on a small green. The precise position today of where the gallows was is therefore not easy to work out.

My dad, Arthur, thought it might have been where Nobel Court is now.

It would be an interesting research project to investigate this, but I'm not sure anyone would want to know that the gallows was once where their house is now! I certainly wouldn't want to know.

St Ann's Road, which was split in two when the railway came, was once called



Hangman's Lane. I have heard the story about the Faversham Arms being the gallows site but can't shed any further light on it, I'm afraid.

Witches on trial

SUE & DAVE LAMBERTON

Before the assizes were held at Maidstone, we would be fairly certain that any "special assembly gathered under the authority of the Mayor of Faversham" would have taken place in Faversham Guildhall.

We're attaching details of a pamphlet, *The Witches of Kent*, by Kelvin I. Jones (above), to pass on to Michael Sanders.

Although this information is on Kent Witch trials is 17th-century in particular, and he is focusing on the 18th century, they were clearly capital crimes and may provide avenues for him to continue his research.

Editor's note: thank you. I shall pass on this information.

St Mary church architecture explained

HAROLD GOODWIN

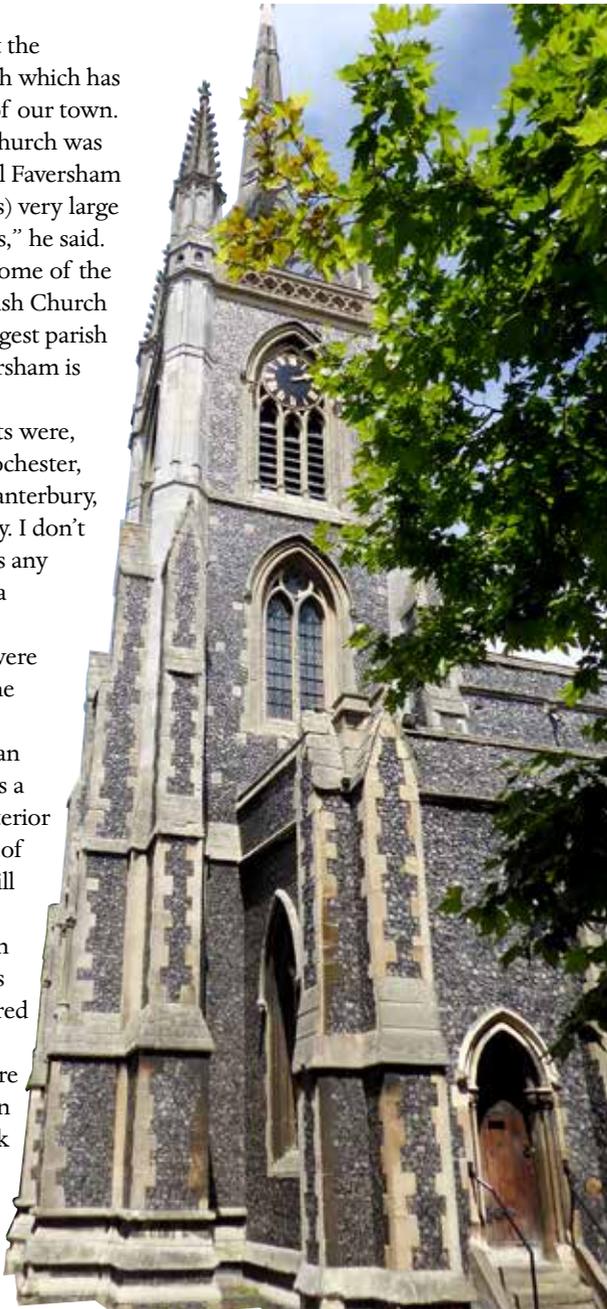
Arthur Percival once wrote that the significance of our parish church which has for centuries stood at the core of our town.

“Though Faversham parish church was only half the size of the original Faversham Abbey church, it was (and still is) very large by most parish church standards,” he said. “In fact, it remains larger than some of the UK’s cathedrals. Maidstone Parish Church has always claimed to be the largest parish church in Kent, but in fact Faversham is larger, by a whisker.

“The parish church’s transepts were, and are, longer than those at Rochester, and wider than those even at Canterbury, Rochester and Faversham Abbey. I don’t think the church’s large size was any accident; I think it was making a statement about the stature of Faversham – important if you were quarrelling with the abbey, as the council so often was.”

On 16 July, at midday, Jonathan Carey will conduct what he calls a “conversational tour” of the exterior and some of the older interiors of our parish church. This will I will consider how the building has evolved and the ways it has been altered and restored. Jonathan is one of our trustees and is a retired conservation architect who has been inspecting architect to more than 60 churches in the Anglican Dioceses of London, Southwark and Canterbury. Please meet outside the South Porch.

A collection will be made to support the work of the friends in conserving the building.



The Drill Hall has become the town’s Assembly Rooms once more

Sleeping Beauty awakes

DOROTHY PERCIVAL

This month’s extract from Arthur’s letters is from June, 2000, headlined “Faversham’s Sleeping Beauty” and sent to the *Faversham Times* and the town centre manager.

“If you asked most people in the town whether the elegant interior show in the first picture still existed, they would doubt it. Well, of course it does – it’s the Drill Hall in Preston Street. Peter Stevens has twice suggested in recent years that it should resume its original function as a suite of Assembly Rooms. I am sure he is right.

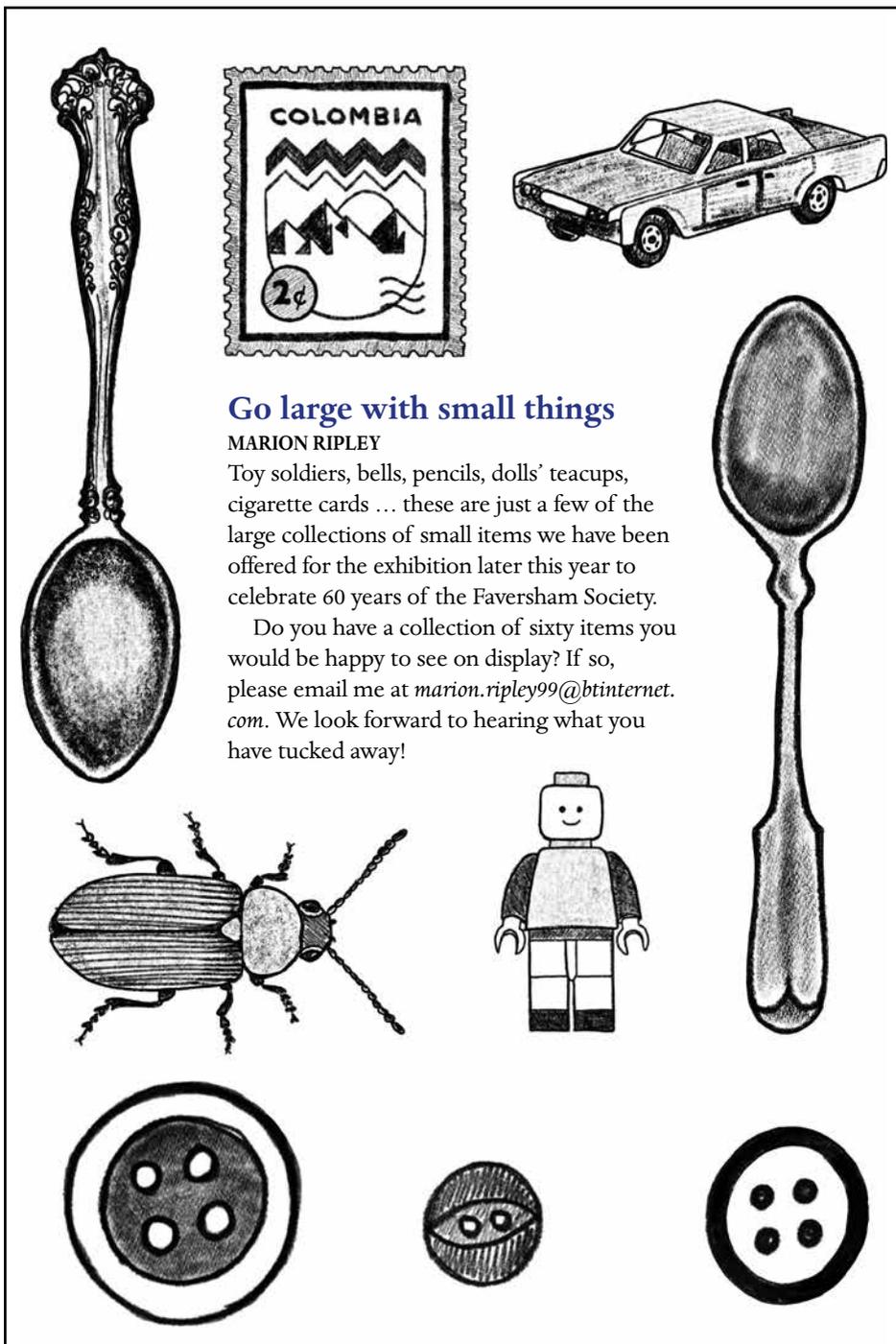
“The main hall at the Alexander Centre is great for some types of function but for others its square shape makes it unsuitable, and its acoustics are appalling. The Assembly Rooms are not as big but have better acoustics, enjoy natural light and would make an attractive venue for exhibitions, concerts and

dances – there is even a musicians’ gallery, though this is at present blocked in.

“Apart from that, the rooms have hardly changed since they opened in 1849. Redecorated in the original style, they would be a great asset to the town. The second photo shows them as they were in 1980 when owned by the Ministry of Defence and used by the army cadets.

“In your new role as town centre manager you might like to consider making it your (long-term!) target to restore them to public use by 2008.”

After years of massive effort by the magnificent band of trustees, we now have our stunningly beautiful Assembly Rooms which take my breath away every time I go in. *Peter Stevens was a local historian and contributor to this newsletter who died recently. It was typical of Arthur to generously acknowledge anyone else’s contribution to an idea he was pursuing.*



Go large with small things

MARION RIPLEY

Toy soldiers, bells, pencils, dolls' teacups, cigarette cards ... these are just a few of the large collections of small items we have been offered for the exhibition later this year to celebrate 60 years of the Faversham Society.

Do you have a collection of sixty items you would be happy to see on display? If so, please email me at marion.ripley99@btinternet.com. We look forward to hearing what you have tucked away!

Letter to the Charity Commission

DAVID MELVILLE

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Faversham Society, registered charity No 1135262, to report procedural errors that were unfortunately made in relation to our annual general meeting on 1 June 2022.

I have set out errors made below. The chair and trustees have apologised to the membership of the Faversham Society for these errors. I have also outlined remedial action taken by the Board of Trustees.

Report of errors in AGM administration

- ❖ The Faversham Society's articles require us to elect trustees via resolutions. In pre-AGM correspondence to society members, our chair mistakenly suggested that there may not be a need for votes as there were no contested trustee elections. This was an error, and clarification was subsequently issued – over a week before the AGM – that votes to elect trustees and officers of the society would take place. Proxy forms were made available to those members who could not attend the AGM in person.
- ❖ The Faversham Society's articles require that personal statements for each trustee nominee be made available to members before the AGM. While personal statements for new trustee nominees were published in the AGM section of our website, personal statements for trustees standing for re-election were only available on the Trustee page of the website – and not on the AGM page. This was rectified prior to the AGM.
- ❖ The Faversham Society received one

complaint regarding the issues outlined above, which contained a request for the AGM to be postponed. The Board of Trustees, after consulting with the society's president, decided not to postpone the AGM, but instead took the following remedial actions.

Remedial action

- ❖ As the 1 June, 2022, AGM convened, the society's president fully apprised all in attendance of the administrative errors made, and made a full apology.
- ❖ The president informed the AGM that the Board of Trustees would be self-reporting administrative errors to the Charity Commission and would publish an explanation and apology in full to the Society's membership.
- ❖ The president held a vote as to whether the 73 members in attendance would like to continue with the AGM, or postpone, based on this context. The AGM voted in significant majority to continue the AGM.
- ❖ The president proceeded with the AGM, including election of trustees and officers. The chair of the society also apologised for administrative errors during his address.

We of course also apologise sincerely to the Charity Commission for the errors made in the administration of the society's AGM. We hope you are reassured that there was no ill intention, and feel satisfied appropriate and proportionate remedial action has been taken. I attached to this correspondence draft minutes of the full AGM on 1st June 2022.

*Sir David Melville CBE
Vice-chair, Faversham Society*

Queen honours Westbrook's green volunteers

ANNA STONOR

The Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond, a group of volunteers based in Faversham, has been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.

The group was formed in 2013 with the aim of bringing a neglected urban stream back to life for the benefit of the community and wildlife. Work has included clearing fly-tipping and litter, enhancing habitats, ecological surveying, water monitoring, improving eel passage, installing bird and bat boxes, planting trees, bulbs and wildflower seeds, improving signage, fundraising, publicity and publication of a historic walking tour of the area.

The Friends also take part in consultations, including on green spaces, water resources and quality, and work with others to promote the value of urban green spaces such as the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond, and the importance of volunteering for individuals and the community.

The Westbrook is a globally rare chalk stream and the Friends aim to raise the profile of this and other chalk rivers along the north Kent coast. Chalk rivers are designated as priority habitats, a range of habitat types that have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring



MATTHEW HATCHWELL

conservation action. As well as being important for ecology, the Westbrook has a fascinating history as it was fundamental to gunpowder manufacture and watercress growing. Faversham was the centre of the nation's explosives industry for 400 years and Chart Mills, along the stream, very probably supplied gunpowder for the Battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo.

The group is working on a project with Swale Borough Council, Faversham Town Council, the South East Rivers Trust and others to tackle the increasing silt levels in Stonebridge Pond, where generations of people congregate to feed the wildfowl.

Matthew Hatchwell, who chairs the group, said: "This award is a tribute not only to the volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain and enhance this rare chalk stream that has played such an important part in the history of Faversham, but also to the broader community and partners



JOHN ROWLAND

who support our work in a multitude of ways. The Queen's award will give extra weight to our efforts to have the Westbrook and other local streams inscribed on the national database of chalk rivers, to tackle the accumulation of silt in Stonebridge Pond, and to maintain water flow in the face of new house-building and increased abstraction from the chalk aquifer."

I helped to set the group up in 2013 and am now its secretary. I'm over the moon that the Friends have received the award

BOB GOMES



Clockwise from left: Friends install a low-flow channel in the Westbrook; a stickleback in the Westbrook; and a migrant hawk dragonfly hovers over Stonebridge Pond

and it's all thanks to our incredible and dedicated volunteers and the partners we work with. I have got so much out of my involvement in the group – an understanding of the heritage and ecology of the area, an appreciation of the value of water and green space and the benefits they bring to communities, an increased confidence in the power of volunteering as well as lots of new friends.

I'm particularly proud that we managed to carry on with our work during the pandemic as that was a time when the Westbrook's value as a space for local people to enjoy really came to the fore.

I would also particularly like to thank Mark Loos of the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership. Without his encouragement the Friends would probably not exist.

We are a very informal group and always welcome new members. Please see the details below.

Friendsofthewestbrook.wordpress.com

FAVERSHAM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



The Faversham Society Newsletter is edited by Stephen Rayner, who is independent of the board. Contributions are welcomed, and should be received by midday on the 15th of the month before publication, preferably by email to favnewsletter@gmail.com. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Faversham Society or of the editor. All contributions will be edited and the editor's decision is final.

ADVERTISING

Clubs, societies, organisations and businesses are encouraged to advertise in the newsletter. The cost is £40 a page (discounts are available for block booking). The minimum boxed ad measures 59mm x 93mm (or equivalent) and costs £10. Cheques should be made payable to the Faversham Society and sent to Jan West at the address above. We also use BACS – ask for details.

DIGITAL EDITION

Please consider saving the society printing costs by receiving your newsletter by email. Contact membership@favershamsociety.org.

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FAVERSHAM SOCIETY OPENING



The Fleur de Lis museum at 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, is now closed for reorganisation, refurbishment and repairs.

The Visitor Information Centre and book and gift shop at 12 Market Place is open 10am-1pm Sunday to Wednesday and 10am-4pm Thursday to Saturday. 01795 534542
info@favershamsociety.org

The Fleur de Lis second-hand bookshop at 1a Gatefield Lane is open 10am-3.30pm, Monday to Saturday, closed on Sundays. 01795 590621

Chart Gunpowder Mills in Nobel Court, off South Road, are open 2pm-5pm Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays from Easter to end of October, at other times by arrangement.

The Faversham Society is registered charity No1135262 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales No 7112241.
www.favershamsociety.org