

# Faversham Society Newsletter

August 2022

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George House at the foot of the Mall has been mounting window exhibitions. The latest features the Fab Four See pages 6-7

## From the chairman

HAROLD GOODWIN

The Cleve Hill solar development at Graveney is active again. The developer, now Project Fortress, is applying to Swale Council for the discharge of planning conditions.

The Faversham Society has objected to the developer's traffic management plan and "discharge requirement 9 surface and foul water drainage". Our representations are on the Swale planning website and our policy blog on the website. *See below*

Open Gardens was a spectacular success with more than 1,200 paying visitors who came to enjoy the 30 gardens that were open. Thanks go to all those who opened their gardens and organised and staffed the

event. Only through the efforts of our volunteers can events like this be organised.

Antony Millett and our town walks guides have welcomed Ukrainian refugees to Faversham. They have provided a short programme of three walks: the Fleur Heritage Centre and Museum; the guildhall, the Magna Carta display, central Faversham; and gunpowder, the Chart Mills and the creek.

If you have not enjoyed one of our walking with history walks, you have missed a real treat. They start every Saturday in July and August at 10.30am and 2pm. Join at the VIC in Market Place. Full details are on our website [favershamsociety.org/guided-walks](http://favershamsociety.org/guided-walks)

Pat Ross has pointed out that in *History*

of *the World in 1,000 Objects*, published by Dorling Kindersley, Faversham is mentioned three times: for our Magna Carta, the moot horn and the Faversham mace.

John Owen has contributed an obituary for John O'Kill whose funeral took place in July. See page 7. Others have commented on John's extreme modesty and the vital contribution he and his colleague John Culmer made to the Faversham Society, contributing to the revival of the heritage centre late last century.

Jonathan Carey's "conversation" with those that joined him at St Mary of Charity Church was a great success. I was unable to attend – I was working abroad – but many of those who joined Jonathan raved about how good it was. I hope he can be persuaded to do another conversation soon.

Don't miss the performances of *The Skate Boys of Faversham Town*, and *The Long and Winding Creek* at the parish church in August. See page 4.

## Society's solar park demands

The Faversham's Society's submission of details to discharge requirement 9 surface and foul water drainage at the Cleve Hill solar development site. The society:

1. Objects to the discharge of requirement 9 on the basis that the proposal takes no account of the risk of extensive contaminated water run-off resulting from dealing with thermal runaway fires in the BESS.
2. Asserts as a consequence of (1) that the plan is premature and cannot be revised, agreed and discharged until the BESS (battery energy storage system) design and the battery safety management plan are specified.

3. Recommends that the developers accept that facilities for the containment, storage and treatment of large volumes of contaminated run-off water will need to be allowed for in the site layout plan.
4. Recommends that while the levels of leached metals from photovoltaic arrays detected so far are considered safe, the long-term environmental risks remain unknown. Insufficient toxicity and environmental risk information currently exists. Soil and groundwater samples should therefore be collected regularly (at least annually) by a third party from multiple locations within the solar park and analysed to ensure a) that concentrations of leached metals do not reach unsafe levels; b) that they are not carried by water into the adjacent Swale site of special scientific interest / special protection area / Ramsar site / marine conservation zone; and c) that there is no long-term build-up that could preclude the current plan for managed reversion to saltmarsh at the end of solar park's lifespan.

## Arthurs' Archers target

DOROTHY PERCIVAL

Ever optimistically pushing his luck ... here's a letter from Arthur in November, 1988.

On one occasion Arthur had given a talk to Selling's annual parish meeting and during the adjournment to the White Lion met a scriptwriter of *The Archers* who lived locally. Checkily milking this slight connection, I quote from the letter he wrote to her on behalf of the Civic Trust.

"What I'm wondering is whether you feel there might be any scope for

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## Nell Finn, our shady lady

KEITH ROBINSON

It's generally accepted by medievalists and art historians that many of the carved grotesques that adorn our ancient churches and cathedrals are probably portraits of local characters – the village idiot, the drunken innkeeper, and the creepy old cleric.

While iconoclasts defaced saintly sculptures, smashed stained-glass windows, and generally destroyed a large part of our cultural heritage, many of these naive masterpieces survive. Tucked in under the eaves of our churches, as corbels or bosses, carved into pew ends, or as misericords, are beautiful but often scandalous, even obscene, images which were apparently appreciated, indeed valued, by our puritan ancestors.

Such an appreciation of the crude and scurrilous is I believe an essential part of the English character exemplified by the cartoons of Gillray and Rowlandson that continued in the works of Donald McGill and later of Gerald Scarfe and Ralph Steadman. The outrageous double-entendre of the Victorian and Edwardian music hall, and latterday masters as Max Miller, on such subjects as mothers-in-law and nationality – now so deplored – were a verbal expression of this.

How, you may ask, does this relate to archaeology and Faversham of all places?

Well, Tanners Street was probably the site of the original waterside settlement, with Faversham's first "town hall", which became a royal manor, a limb of the Cinque Ports and a centre of the explosives industry. From one of Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group's earliest excavations in a Tanners Street back garden came the



shattered remains of a tin-glazed dish decorated with a mermaid which, christened "Nell Finn", is the group's cherished logo.

Tin-glazed pottery was one of the most popular forms of ceramic in the days just before the mass production of Josiah Wedgwood. English tin-glazed pottery was much influenced by the production of Dutch potters. It was rather fragile – perfect pieces of quality are rare and greatly prize – but did allow the decorator a measure of freedom and spontaneity echoing the Kentish lead-glazed slipware of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Nell Finn was certainly a prized possession of an undoubtedly prosperous Faversham resident. But look closely at Nell. Is she a glamorous siren bent on luring lovesick mariners to their deaths? No. She's a hard-faced harridan who has seen better days! She was no doubt a well-beloved habitu e of some shady quayside premises at Deptford or perhaps Chatham!

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introducing the 1989 Environment Week into *The Archers* scripts. I enclose the September/October issue of our magazine Heritage Outlook which contains a report on the successful 1988 week. Sponsorship from British Telecom should make 1989 even better. [British Telecom] is also encouraging its own vast staff to participate. Some don't need any prompting as it happens that the present chairman of the Faversham Society works for [British Telecom] and has been active in the society since his schooldays.

"I'm told that one of the *Archers*' cast is chairman of his own local society, so words might come even more naturally than usual from him."

It's difficult to imagine how this was received and I cannot recall, but someone might, if there was a positive result.

A little taster for next month. Guess what happened when a weary member of Arthur's WEA evening class dragged himself out of loyalty to the evening about the Faversham brick industry greatly fearing a public lapse into a deep sleep.

## Church musical festival

GEOFF SANDIFORD

The reason Faversham has such a magnificent parish church, the largest in Kent, is the wealth generated by the trade brought in and out by the tide on the creek.

St Mary of Charity, with its distinctive crown spire, is a fitting venue to host a festival of music from 13 to 20 August, to celebrate all the good things about this town.

On Thursday 18 August at 7pm, we will be performing our musical presentation,

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# George House: w

JANE SECKER

George House, the former George Inn, lies at the station end of the Mall in Faversham. It was originally a farmhouse and became a pub in 1759 run by Ridgen's Brewery through to 1970 when it became a family home.

Its current owner, Colin Rushton, moved from London seven years ago and was enchanted by its fascinating history and rambling grounds. However, those who regularly walk from the Mall into town will know the George for its distinctive large windows which since lockdown are more often than not decorated with seasonal displays or works of art.

The idea for decorating the windows started in the depths of winter of 2020 with many of us facing a Christmas in lockdown. I suggested the windows would lend themselves to a fabulous Christmas scene and Colin hit on the idea of building six boxes in each of the windows which could accommodate a self-contained display. He now regularly creates a display for Easter, Halloween and other events, suggesting viewers make a donation to a local charity.

For the summer season of 2022 the windows are celebrating all things related to the Beatles. The windows mark two anniversaries taking place this year – the first being Paul McCartney's 80th birthday and the second the 60th anniversary of the release of the Beatles first hit *Love Me Do* in October, 1962.

Colin hails from Liverpool and grew up near the church hall in Woolton where John Lennon and Paul met. One

# Where Penny Lane meets the Mall

of his brothers was at school with Paul and George Harrison and has an early edition of the White Album (not on display!). Another of Colin's brothers collected the newspaper money from George's house, until he complained about the late delivery of *Melody Maker*, the musicians' trade paper. He also has a brother-in-law who was the curate at St Peter's Church, where Paul and John met. And, finally, an aunt worked in a hospital with John's father during the war! Needless to say Colin is a huge Beatles fan and had been watching the

*Get Back* documentary earlier in the year when the idea came about to collect together his Beatles memorabilia and set up a display for the summer.

Colin and I also attended Faversham Literary Festival in February, when the Beatles biographer and historian Mark Lewisohn was interviewed by Christine Rayner, followed by a performance at the Marlowe of the amazing Bootleg Beatles.

The George House display features most of the Beatles albums, many donated by friends, and a wide selection of Beatles objects on display including replica guitars played by John and Paul in the *Get Back* film. Colin unveiled the display on 10 July and invited friends and family to his garden to listen to musicians perform Beatles numbers in an informal concert.

If you're walking past the George Inn do take a look at the boxes which will remain in place until the autumn. Colin also runs the U3A cycling group which go out on Monday and Wednesday at 11am and has a number of music and poetry groups that meet at the studio which is to the rear of his house.

If you have an idea for a display at George House or would like to find out more, drop him a line at [colin.rushton@hotmail.com](mailto:colin.rushton@hotmail.com)



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*The Long and Winding Creek*, documenting the history and development of our tidal link with the sea. Expect history, catchy songs and humour from my live acoustic band.

Monday 15 August at 7pm marks the return of *The Skate Boys of Faversham Town*. When we performed this show at the first Faversham Literary Festival in 2018 I could not find any photographs of the old roller-skating rink. The new presentation has several images of the rink and those roller hockey teams. If you want an uplifting story worthy of the silver screen, come and see how the Faversham team became champions of Europe in 1930.

The concerts will raise funds for some much-needed lavatories at the St Mary of Charity. To quote a trustee of the church: "We are waiting with legs crossed!"

Tickets cost £6 and will be available at the door, or beforehand from the Faversham Society shop in Market Place or [favershamsociety.org/store](http://favershamsociety.org/store)

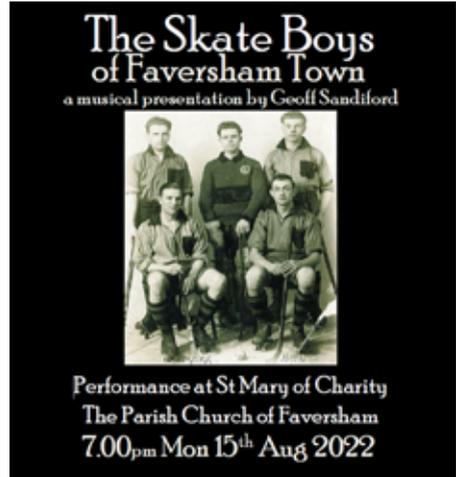
## Medieval complications

HAROLD GOODWIN

A new paper by Anna Anisimova has been published about medieval Faversham in *The Governance of Medieval European Towns*. She writes:

"Faversham, a small Kentish town, was in a peculiar situation during the Middle Ages, being both a seigneurial town with a monastic lord (Faversham Abbey) and a member of the privileged Cinque Ports confederation.

"This circumstance created a complicated situation in terms of urban jurisdiction, as there were several courts with overlapping jurisdictions – seigneurial,



The Skate Boys  
of Faversham Town  
a musical presentation by Geoff Sandiford



Performance at St Mary of Charity  
The Parish Church of Faversham  
7.00pm Mon 15<sup>th</sup> Aug 2022



*The Long and Winding  
Creek*



Performance at St Mary of Charity  
the Parish Church of Faversham  
Thurs 18<sup>th</sup> Aug 2022 at 7.00pm

manorial, borough, and that of the Cinque Ports. Several disputes occurred over the medieval period, with townspeople having to defend their rights not only against their monastic lord but the warden of the Cinque Ports as well."

Read the full paper on the link below  
[www.academia.edu/62288718/The\\_jurisdiction\\_in\\_a\\_small\\_Kentish\\_town\\_between\\_norm\\_and\\_practice](http://www.academia.edu/62288718/The_jurisdiction_in_a_small_Kentish_town_between_norm_and_practice)

## John O'Kill, supreme gent

JOHN OWEN

John and Mary O'Kill came to Faversham when he retired from the King's School, Rochester, in the 1990s.

They were both great readers and book-lovers. John's interests led him to the Faversham Society at a time of growth from a small heritage society with a dedicated but elderly and inflexible house manager. The small museum, the archive and the library were accumulating collections that needed more space and curating.

John, who died in June, devoted his time to sorting and listing the archive and book collection, which were stacked in piles and wardrobes in a large windowless walk-in cupboard under the Fleur hall. At the same time John Culmer retired from Market Harborough, returned to Faversham and devoted his time to improving the museum.

In the late 1990s, the society bought 10-11 Preston Street with the aim of converting 13 Preston Street into a large museum with library and offices attached. The two Johns worked together to organise that which we have today. A few years later, 12 Preston Street became available, which the society bought. John O'Kill organised and managed the second-hand bookshop he set up there, assisted by Jean Spiers and Rene.

John Culmer was on the society's council. John O'Kill became a trustee of the new board after 2009.

John O'Kill was the classic gentleman



volunteer who saw what needed to be done at a particular time in the development of the society and quietly got on with doing it. The society owes him a great debt of gratitude for his knowledge and love of books which he put to the use of the Faversham Society.

*Stephen Rayner writes:* On Tuesday mornings in 1998 I joined the two Johns as an assistant curator in that windowless cupboard. My task was to help to classify boxes and boxes of Arthur Percival's papers. Between sessions deciphering his – and others' – scrawl, we had a great time. I can picture Culmer, dressed as immaculately as you would expect from a retired gent's outfitter, and O'Kill, peering owlishly at the latest donation of dusty tomes.

One morning I arrived a few minutes late and found them both particularly bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. "I wonder," said J O'K, "if you would mind helping us sort through this lot," he said, pointing to a pile of cardboard boxes that hadn't been there the previous Tuesday. "They turned up at the Alexander Centre and the caretaker had no idea what to do with them, so he sent them here." I opened the first box offered. It contained a human skull.

After I had regained my composure, they explained this was the collection of bones from the Faversham Abbey excavation that had been retained by the British Museum until, without a word of warning, it shipped them back to town.

Farewell, John – it was fun.

## 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](mailto: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.

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### DIGITAL EDITION

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## FAVERSHAM SOCIETY OPENING



The Fleur de Lis museum at 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, is now open from 11am to 3pm on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until 27 August. Entry is free and further opening times will be announced later, depending on building work.

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](mailto: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.

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