

Faversham Society Newsletter

November 2022

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Chairman's column

HAROLD GOODWIN

I hope that you will enjoy our two exhibitions celebrating the 60 years of the Faversham Society. The Secret Treasures exhibition (*see page 10*) in the Fleur is a real treat, and the diamond jubilee celebration in the Alexander Centre (*see page 11*) reflects on the society's history. Be sure to visit them if you can and bring a friend. Our volunteers will be there. We might sign up some new members.

On 6 October, it was suggested to Swale Council's Planning and Transport Policy Working Group that the next stages of the Local Plan review should be paused because "with mounting uncertainty around the government's direction of travel for the planning system, any

A huge crowd watches as the war memorial is unveiled in November, 1922

See page 5



consultation now will likely have to be repeated in the future to take into account the council's response to those changes".

This is being considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 19 October, where it is likely to be agreed.

This means that the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan, expected to be released for consultation in mid-January, is critical. If approved in the referendum, it will help us to protect Faversham, but only within the confines of the parish boundary. Meanwhile, in the absence of a current Local Plan and a five-year housing land

supply agreement, we remain vulnerable to developments around the town.

The society's policy remains that we are "opposed to all large-scale housing developments on greenfield land adjacent to Faversham". Three major developments are proposed for southeast Faversham, and the Abbey Fields development has still not been turned down by Swale planners.

Given current central government policy and proposals for changes in planning, it seems very unlikely that Faversham can escape all housing development on greenfield land.

The Faversham Society remains committed to ensuring public engagement in consultations about development and will organise meetings for any developer when asked. Through this newsletter, we will continue informing members of opportunities to attend consultations or express opinions by other means. The Duchy of Cornwall has organised an online survey and a public exhibition and consultation (*see below*). None of the other developers has offered any opportunities for consultation.

There is much Faversham history to be recovered and written up. The article by Patricia Diaz about Mary English (*pages 8-9*)

is an example: she led a colourful life and was called called "Bolívar's friend" and "La Belle of Bogotá". We plan to invite Patricia to talk about this remarkable daughter of Faversham in the spring. Please contact me if you would like to help organise and promote the talk.

chair@favershamsociety.info

A path to lifelong learning

DOROTHY PERCIVAL

My little tale last month about Arthur's Workers' Educational Association evening classes prompted a few inquiries from people who didn't live here during those years. So, a little bit about them might be appropriate.

The story all started in the early 1980s when Harold Goodwin, the Faversham Society's current chairman, was WEA tutor organiser for east Kent, a post of crusading dedication rather than financial ambition, as indeed was being a WEA lecturer.

He suggested Arthur should give a course on Faversham's history. Apart from time given up to the Faversham Society, London commuting didn't make a reliable local 7.30 start easy, so Arthur needed some persuasion. But he went for it, assembled thousands of slides and detailed notes with

extraordinary speed and continued the lectures for more than 20 years. The pattern settled down to autumn and spring terms of 10 lectures each alternating between one year on the history of the town and next on the surrounding villages.

The courses became something of an institution, and a bit of a rite of passage for newcomers. They were packed with information, illustrated with hundreds of slides and all class members got a complete set of notes. Adjournment to the Bear Inn became a tradition where many friendships, including at least two permanent romances, began.

As I mentioned before, the lectures also inspired active membership in the Faversham Society.

Delightful informal additions to the classes arose, including a "treasures" evening and a spoof "certificate" that did not go down well with the WEA officialdom. The branch Christmas party was always oversubscribed and climaxed with Arthur's appearance, vacuum cleaner in hand, for the ritual carpet de-crumbing accompanied by whoops, jeers and queries as to his competence.

Then, at one end-of-spring-term gathering in the pub, peevish murmurings started. "Arthur, what about Monday evenings in the summer? We won't know what to do with ourselves."

So the next year a course officially called "Farming and Industry on Faversham's Doorstep" started. Immediately nicknamed the "jaunts course", it covered a much wider scope than the title suggests and was always a sellout. The story of the WEA management's initial dismissal of the course as lacking in educational content, the local committee's wily sidestepping manoeuvres to facilitate it, and the head

Rails beyond Faversham

PETER LANDON

In my piece in the September newsletter about Lord Harris's "gold ticket", the East Kent Railway (EKR) at Strood was being deliberately treated badly by the South Eastern Railway after building a link from Faversham to the South Eastern line at Strood. This caused difficulties in ticketing, handling goods and parcels. Train formations were also changed to deal with large numbers of troop movements.

This route to London Bridge was extremely busy and a good reason why the EKR wanted to have its own line to London and soon they did just that heading for Bromley and Victoria.

But it was in 1853 that the EKR won approval for a line from Strood to Canterbury. It opened between Faversham and Chatham on 25 January, 1858, with a connecting horse-bus service to Strood until March when a through train service became possible.

To gain parliamentary approval to build the railway, the bridge had to be built for strategic reasons at the behest of parliament. The government wanted the route built first to ensure adequate defence of the realm against possible French aggression. It would link the arsenals and enable the troops, munitions and equipment to be moved more easily between Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness and Dover. By the summer of 1860 the line had been extended to both Canterbury and Whitstable.

HAVE YOUR SAY THE DUCHY OF CORNWALL'S PLANS FOR SOUTHEAST FAVERSHAM

You can express your view here online at www.givemyview.com/southeastfaversham/surveys

If you answer the survey, you will be able to see how people have voted.

There is a further public consultation planned and organised

by Duchy. The Faversham Society's only engagement is to have drawn it to members' attention.

Public consultation events will take place at the Faversham Assembly Rooms in Preston Street on Thursday, 3 November, from 12-8pm and on Saturday, 5 November, from 10-3pm.

FAVERSHAM TOWN COUNCIL CELEBRATES
BLACK HISTORY MONTH
2022

Assembly Rooms
22nd October 7-8:00 PM



Prof. Hakim Adi
"African and Caribbean People in Britain"

Professor Hakim Adi presents an illustrated summary of the 2000+ years of history of African and Caribbean people in Britain.



Prof. Hakim Adi is Professor of the History of Africa and the African Diaspora at the University of Chichester. Hakim was the first historian of African heritage to become a professor of history in Britain.

In January 2018, he launched the world's first online Masters by Research (MRes) programme on the History of Africa and the African Diaspora. Hakim is also the founder and consultant historian of the Young Historians Project

Copies of the book will be available to purchase on the night

office's later mercenary change of mind is not one to detail here.

I could write so much about the unforgettable evenings we had. If you want to know more, find someone who attended, press the right button and their favourite stories will flow. For key prompts try "perry tasting", "hot night at the laundry", "riding the hay bales" or "being a coach works bus driver". After Arthur died in 2014, Jane Baker continued the tradition for several years. It was a great gesture with the added generosity of keeping the title "Arthur's Jaunts".

Why we never thought of filming the history lectures no one can explain. But the valiant archive team at the Fleur are going to attempt a digital reconstruction from the students' notes and Arthur's slides. His magnificent ad-lib filling out of the bare bones of the notes is lost, but the new version will stand in its own right.

The first remembrance

NEIL TONGE

When the armistice was declared on 11 November 1918, Faversham went to town. Jubilant crowds put out the flags, linked arms and cheered through the streets.

At last the terrible bloodletting was over. The cost in human life had been horrific. At least 10 million had died globally and many lives wrecked with injury both physical and mental. Faversham, too, had paid a high and painful price. According to the research carried out for *Faversham in the Great War*, published by the town council and *Bygone Kent* in 2018, 17.5% of the eligible male population died in this conflict. That, is two or three individuals were killed each week and three in each street or lane.

It was not until 3 November, 1922, after

several years of deliberation as to where a permanent commemoration to the war dead was to be sited, that a large crowd assembled at the corner of Stone Street and Roman Road to watch the unveiling of the cenotaph to the fallen of Faversham.

This centenary has provided the inspiration for a school project, *The First Remembrance 1922*. With the financial assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, which also provided the funding for the *Great Explosion of Faversham* with Davington Primary School (see the June newsletter), we have again been successful.

On this occasion five Faversham schools – Davington Primary School, Bysing Wood Primary, St Mary of Charity Primary, Ospringe Church of England Primary, and Selling Church of England Primary – will be involved in the project.

The project also includes an evening talk by Philip Neame, youngest son of Philip Neame VC, of Selling, at the Alexander Centre on 4 November. I can recommend a programme that the younger Philip was involved in which is one of the most moving and honest accounts of warfare I have encountered: *Our Falklands War: Front line*.

I will teach the introductory activities at each school, the teachers will then carry on with further activities. About halfway through the programme the children will go to the Alexander Centre to be involved in interactive activities with actors and then each school will conclude with remembrance ceremonies at each of the schools on 11 November.

The hope is that not only will the children find the activities fascinating in themselves, but they will have a more complete historical understanding when it comes to Poppy time.

Marathon editing session to

put Faversham on Wikipedia

JANE SECKER

The Faversham Society was delighted to host its first Wikipedia “editathon” at Faversham Library on 13 October. Lucy Hinnie and Richard Nevell, Wikimedia UK staff, delivered a three-hour training event. We’re grateful to Sophie at Faversham Library for being our host and to Brigid at Swale Libraries for agreeing to the collaboration.

I’m Dr Jane Secker, one of the newest Faversham Society trustees, and I organised the event. In my day job I’m senior lecturer in educational development at City, University of London. I’m also a former librarian and I chair the UK’s Information Literacy Group.

Wikimedia UK has a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to run Connected Heritage, a programme that offers free digital skills training to heritage organisations in England and Wales. The Faversham session was to teach volunteers how to edit Wikipedia, with the intention of improving, enriching and updating pages about the town and surrounding area. The society has a wealth of secondary and primary sources, such as books, papers and photographs, that may be suitable to add to Wikipedia. What we can also do is improve the accuracy of the information and add additional citations to the many sources in the Fleur heritage centre.

Why would we want to do this? Simply, Wikipedia is by far the most common website for people new to a topic to consult. If you google anything, Wikipedia is frequently top of the results.

Five society members joined four librarians from the University of Kent, who



Richard (right) with trainees on the editathon in Faversham Library

all work in special collections, archives and cataloguing, and a volunteer from Swale Friends of the Earth.

Lucy was keen to stress that Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia, which means its pages need to have a particular style but in essence it should be factual, neutral information that needs to be available freely. For some in the room, this dispelled the myth that the information was not always reliable. Users must also respect others’ viewpoints and behave civilly. Wikipedia is also keen that under-represented voices are heard.

Building blocks

Lucy illustrated the typical structure of an article. The summary at the top of the

page tells us why the subject was notable, or meriting an entry. Key information about a person typically includes a photograph, date of birth and death (if relevant), occupation, nationality, spouses and children. She also highlighted the importance of a page linking to elsewhere on Wikipedia or externally. Finally, she spoke of citations to sources that could verify details. These are usually secondary sources, such as books or newspaper articles.

Creating a user page

Our first task as new Wikipedia editors was to make our own user page, which tells other users about us. The level of detail is entirely up to you. However, this is the place to declare any conflicts of interest you have. If I, for example, were creating page about Faversham, I would mention

that I was a trustee of the society.

Each user also gets what is called a sandbox, which is where you can practise creating content – an ideal place to try out how to add links, add photographs or start drafting any new content you might have.

Finally, Lucy explained how to create new pages and the importance of checking Wikipedia first to see if a page exists. A few of us were interested in creating a page about the Faversham Society – we checked whether it exists, (it doesn’t), although the society is mentioned on the Faversham page.

Writing style

Richard ran us through the style and expectations for editors. He touched on a number of Wikipedia policies that underpin the authority and reliability of the site. These included:

Notability Contributions need to be about noteworthy people or things. Therefore, there needs to be significant coverage elsewhere about a topic to warrant a Wikipedia entry not just passing mention.

Conflicts of interest Don’t write about yourself, your family, or people or organisations with which you are closely associated. And declare any interests you have on your user page..

Reliable sources These include published books, peer-reviewed journal articles, newspapers, or other web pages. Ideally, you want to be pointing to independent pages. Secondary sources are fine, but archival sources are also welcome.

Copyright issues The content that you add to Wikipedia needs to be available freely, so you can’t lift text from a book or elsewhere

on the web and publish it on Wikipedia. Similarly, any photographs that you share need to be either out of copyright and in the public domain, or images that you are happy to upload to Wikipedia and assign an open licence to. This means then that other people will be allowed to use them, while still crediting you.

Systemic bias Wikipedia tries to work hard to avoid systemic bias and allow under-represented voices to be heard. For example, the number of women's biographies now on Wikipedia (19%) is much higher than in the Dictionary of National Biography.

Encyclopaedic tone The writing style is very much meant to be neutral and factual and this is particularly important when writing about controversial people or topics. You should be referring to information that is already out there.

No Joker Richard mentioned the Batman Principle to guide our writing. If we were writing about Batman, he said, it wouldn't be appropriate to edit the page if we were Batman, or his butler Alfred, or his arch-enemy the Joker. However, if we're a Bat fan or we've got a PhD in Batman studies, then we can! And if we once worked for Wayne Enterprises, then maybe we could.

What next?

The session was also designed to train trainers, with the idea of ensuring we now have a local team of people who are able to edit Wikipedia. In due course, we hope to be able to offer training to Faversham Society members and other residents.

I look forward to updating you as this project progresses and if you are keen in getting involved, please do drop me a line.

secker.jane@gmail.com

Mary of Faversham celebrated as the Belle of Bogotá

PATRICIA DIAZ

Let me tell you about Mary English, a 19th-century adventurer and freedom champion from Faversham.

She was born Mary Ballard in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, to a humble family in Faversham. Her father, a dockworker, struggled to provide for his six children. She and her siblings picked up oysters to sell them at inns to buy bread and in the summer went to the Isle of Sheppey to collect fossils.

Mary wrote about her childhood and her copious correspondence remained hidden for 200 years in the attic of her family's home in London, in part for fear that her letters would reveal secrets that her descendants preferred to hide. Her papers were put up for auction and the British Library managed to acquire them.

Mary's journey from Faversham to London, leaving behind her family as a young woman is a remarkable achievement in itself and, we can speculate, is explained by her ability to succeed in taking advantage of the few opportunities that were offered to her at the time by the educated and wealthy friends she made in Kent. Certainly, her letters are written with fluidity, combining humour with expressions of suffering, the mundane and the great tragic events she witnessed. She comes across as an observant person with a strongly individual perspective.

I first encountered Mary English's name in *Viva La Libertad!* a British Library



Patricia Diaz with a canvas of Mary (by William Hobday,, 1818) in the National Portrait Gallery

exhibition in 2010, the bicentenary of the wars of south American Independence from Spain.

As a native Colombian living in the UK for most of my life, I was intrigued by the story of this extraordinary Englishwoman who had travelled to Latin America and made her life in Colombia, only to return once to Britain. Mary was passionate about the idea of freedom and was an

unconditional supporter of Simón Bolívar, known as the Liberator, and she became a key motivating force behind the army of men who went to South America to fight against Spain and were known as the British Legion. Mary also saw a financial future in South America and her decision to represent the interests of a British bank in Colombia provided a unique opportunity for her to create her own wealth and stand on her own feet. A lock of Bolívar's jet-black hair was carefully tucked away among her correspondence.

Who was this Englishwoman who had been deemed worthy of this memento mori and who had been called "Bolívar's friend" and "La Belle of Bogotá"? Her name did not appear in the official history of Colombia, nor in that of England, and no one seemed to know much about her.

As a writer, I could not resist digging into her story and many years and drafts later, I have a manuscript of a historical novel, *Mary English, the Belle of Bogotá*, that is being considered for publication. The challenge presented by the enormous amount of material was to shape Mary's narrative voice, her emotions and ideas using a structure to create an entertaining novel.

In 2025, there will be celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the recognition of Gran Colombia – formed by the countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador – by the UK, the first country to accept the nation as an independent and sovereign republic in 1825.

This will be an opportunity to present readers from the Anglophile and Spanish-speaking worlds with a novel that unites both worlds and stories and to honour Mary English, a remarkable daughter of Faversham.



You are invited to

Secret Treasures

**An exhibition of curious collections
to celebrate 60 years of the Faversham Society**

This free exhibition in October will give everyone a chance to enjoy some wildly varied, quirky collections usually tucked away in homes, garages and store rooms. Each display consists of sixty items, to celebrate sixty years of the Faversham Society and its work to protect the things we care about

Visitors of all ages will be encouraged to engage with the displays – and to start a collection of their own!

The exhibition runs from 15-29 October and is open from 11am to 3pm. (Closed Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays)



Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Preston Street, Faversham



Free exhibition celebrating **Sixty years of the Faversham Society**

We invite you to visit our forthcoming exhibition, celebrating 60 years of the work of the Faversham Society, at the Jubilee Room, Alexander Centre, Preston Street.

The exhibition will showcase achievements of the society since its formation in 1962, including how we have helped to preserve and enrich the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of our beautiful town. It will also be an opportunity to learn more about the work of the society today, as we endure in our efforts to protect our town and ensure that Faversham's individual sense of place and outstanding heritage features are not lost and remain there for future generations.

Visitors to the exhibition can explore how we have negotiated 60 years of growth and development of both our society, and of the town. Over the decades, the society has built on its campaigning roots and expanded work to include the founding of the Fleur de Lis Museum, the discovery and preservation of archive and archaeological materials documenting our town's history, creating tourism assets, such as the Visitor Information Centre and Open Gardens.

As a Faversham resident, we hope you'll visit our exhibition and share in our celebration

Tuesday 25 October: 10am-5pm

Wednesday 26 October: 10am-9pm

including special late-night opening where visitors will have the opportunity to meet society trustees and some of our most experienced volunteers

Please drop into our Visitor Information Centre at 12 Market Place if you require any more details about this event.

For more information about the society and how to join, please visit: www.favershamsociety.org

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 **Visitor Information Centre** and book and gift shop at 12 Market Place is open 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday and 10am-1pm Sunday (opening hours may vary).
info@favershamsociety.org

The **Fleur de Lis museum** at 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, is now open from 11am to 3pm on Fridays and Saturdays. It is also open from 19-22 October and 26-29 October for half-term. Entry is free and further opening times will be announced later, depending on building work.

The **Fleur de Lis second-hand bookshop** in Preston Street is open 10am-3.30pm, Monday to Saturday.

The **Chart Gunpowder Mills** in Nobel Court, off South Road, are open 2pm-5pm Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays from 2 April to 31 October.

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