

Faversham Society Newsletter

January 2023

704



The Faversham Society is concerned about a plan for 180 houses on Abbeyfields and believes it will harm the area near the former medieval abbey

See page 4

Chairman's column

HAROLD GOODWIN

As we enter our 61st year there are some opportunities and challenges.

The Faversham Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan is out for Regulation 14 consultation between 3 January and 14 February. The Faversham Society has organised a members' meeting on 20 January for you to hear more about the draft Neighbourhood Plan and to have your questions answered. *See page 4.*

The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan covers only the area within the parish boundary, although this extends to include parts of the major developments in the Swale Local Plan. The Swale Local Plan is not expected to be in place before 2024 at

the earliest. Until a new National Planning Policy Framework is published, we cannot know what the letter of 5 December from Michael Gove, the housing secretary, will mean in practice.

He made clear in the letter that he will "retain a method for calculating local housing need" but "instruct the Planning Inspectorate that they should no longer override sensible local decision-making." Only when we see the National Planning Policy Framework shall we know what constitutes sensible.

Meanwhile, developers are likely to come forward with planning applications as they have for Highsted Park around Teynham. The Abbeyfield developers are active again. The Faversham Society has

approached our planning barrister again to assist with a further submission. *See page 6.*

Work continues with a group of volunteers to continue correcting and extending information about Faversham on Wikipedia. This is essential to ensuring that our volunteers' work on Faversham's heritage over the past 60 years connects with future generations. A sense of heritage has to be passed on and valued by our children and grandchildren.

The centre of Faversham is designated a conservation area – an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It is one of 51 within the borough and Swale Council has agreed to fund an appraisal to review what has been decided about a strategy for its future. It will be an update of reviews made in 1971 and 2004.

The appraisal will provide an opportunity for Faversham Society members and others in the town to share their views about what should be conserved and why and strengthen the Neighbourhood Plan. The documents can be found here: swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/heritage-and-landscape/conservation-areas.

More information about the conservation area appraisal in the next newsletter.

The Faversham Society's publications group is steaming ahead. *The History of Faversham in 60 Objects* and *Faversham: A Brief History* are selling well, now on sale in the Visitor Information Centre at 12 Market Place and from the online shop on our website. *Arden's House & Arden's Cottage* by Nigel Morgan has been updated, and a range of other papers are now available to download or have printed and posted to

you. You can, of course, buy a printed copy in the VIC. *See page 5.*

Faversham Town Council is surveying individual transport needs, to establish whether there is a need for a community bus service and if so, where it would be needed most. If you, or someone you know, is finding it difficult to get to vital services, it is in your interest to complete the survey for your own sake or for your friend or relative. Survey forms are available in the Visitor Information Centre at 12 Market Place or complete the survey online www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FTCTransportSurvey

This will be a busy year. Please engage with us in our work and happy new year.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Faversham's railway, Part 4

PETER LANDON

The East Kent Railway (EKR) company had received royal assent, on 24 August, 1853, to build a 19-mile double-tracked line from Strood to Canterbury, with a branch to Faversham Quay. That done, the government reminded the directors that a sum of £50,000 would have to be deposited with the surety for the completion of the railway bridge over the Medway at Rochester.

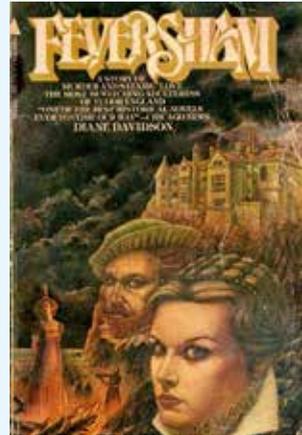
This was to be built by Sir Charles Fox, fresh from his success in constructing the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park – for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Faversham's elite were not wealthy enough, it seems, to finance the railway on their own and Fox used his contacts in the City and elsewhere to buy shares in support.

The bridge design was in the hands of the consulting engineer Sir William Cubitt, but little progress was made until the



The strange tale of marionette murderess in society's collection



Do you know that the society has the marionette of a notorious murderess in its archives?

The fragile puppet, red-lipped and rosy-cheeked, dressed in a scarlet gown and green skirts, is Alice Arden, villainess of Abbey Street.

The puppet, made from papier-mâché and using upcycled clothes of the 1940s, told the story of Arden

of *Faversham*, the murder of Alice's husband Thomas, at the hands of her lover, Mosby, and two assassins, at the former abbey gatehouse.

The puppet tale is told by Justin Croft on the Faversham Life website. Justin says: "This must be one of Faversham's strangest and most unsettling artefacts."

favershamlife.org/upcycled-alice/

£50,000 was released. Delays in completing the railway were exacerbated by the Admiralty's refusal to allow a route to be taken nearer Chatham Dockyard, which would have saved much of the tunnelling through Chatham. Similarly, John Hall would not allow the railway anywhere near his explosives works in Faversham for fear of sparks causing fire and explosions.

A substantial shareholder, Stephen Rumbold Lushington of Norton Court, formerly MP for Canterbury and son-in-law of the 1st Lord Harris of Belmont, was outraged at the construction delays, as were most of the country subscribers.

At one acrimonious meeting held in the

Preston Street Public Rooms in 1855, Charles Jones Hilton, a member of the board and a local banker, took the chair to answer questions and allegations of scurrilous behaviour in share dealings. It was suggested that shares had changed hands in the Fleet Prison for debtors and that local shareholders "would find themselves altogether done if construction were not to begin immediately".

At a board meeting Fox was forced to admit that he had used a member of his office staff to obtain shares to which he (Fox) was not entitled. His first contract was cancelled and he was replaced in March, 1856, by Thomas Russell

Crampton, from Broadstairs, the locomotive designer and engineer, a major shareholder and board member. He had an unsullied reputation and had studied under Sir Daniel Gooch the locomotive superintendent of the Great Western Railway at Swindon.

At last, real work began again. Crampton lent the EKR money in the form of debentures and leased the railway. Men and materials arrived at Faversham Creek and on 1 May, 1856, the first signs of progress were seen with the stumping-out of the line of track between Ospringe and Beacon Hill, followed on 16 May by the removal of soil from the ridge of hill fronting Syndale House.

In June, 1856, Ospringe Road was lowered to receive the railway bridge. That September, houses were demolished in Preston Street to make way for the line.

The first recorded passenger train to travel over the line from Chatham to Faversham was on Wednesday, 11 November, 1857, when – reported by the *Sittingbourne and Sheerness Gazette* – the official opening of the line took place with a train comprising five carriages, brake van, engine and tender, which had set out from Chatham at noon.

It called at Sittingbourne about 1pm, greeted by the town band and a station bedecked with flags and banners. A triumphal arch of evergreens and garlands had been erected bearing the motto, “Sittingbourne”.

Fifteen minutes later, after a congratulatory address on behalf of the residents to the directors, the train set off for Faversham. It arrived about 2pm at the temporary terminus by Preston Street to a similarly enthusiastic reception by Richard Hilton, the mayor of Faversham, with flags,

bunting and cheering at least equal to that of Sittingbourne.

Then out stepped Lord Sondes, the chairman, then Sir Brook Bridges, MP for the East Kent parliamentary division, which covered Faversham. They were accompanied by William Deedes, who was between two spells as MP for East Kent, the board of directors, and the lord mayor of London, Sir Robert Carden. A sumptuous meal followed in the Public Rooms, held jointly with Faversham Agricultural Association.

How the town will shape up

HAROLD GOODWIN

The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan reaches its consultation phase running from 3 January to 14 February. This is a six-week statutory consultation period in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning, England Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulation 2012.

The Neighbourhood Plan can be downloaded here favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/regulation14/

The plan can also be viewed at

- ❖ Faversham Town Hall
- ❖ Faversham Library
- ❖ West Faversham Community Centre
- ❖ The Alexander Centre
- ❖ The Jubilee Centre, Whitstable Road
- ❖ St Mary of Charity Church

A members’ meeting to discuss the neighbourhood plan will be held at the Alexander Centre at 7pm on Friday, 20 January. Representatives of the town council neighbourhood plan steering group will be there to answer your questions. Members of the Faversham Society board will also be present to hear your views.

The town council has been developing a

new neighbourhood plan, which covers the entire parish. You can find a full account of the process to date, including the various forms and schedules of consultation, on the town council website favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan

The Neighbourhood Plan has now reached the Regulation 14 stage, providing residents, landowners and interested bodies an opportunity to make representations on the draft plan. The steering group then responds to these representations these will be considered by an independent examiner appointed by Swale Council.

Following the examiner's report, Swale decides whether the plan proceeds to a referendum, where it must receive more than 50% of the votes of those voting to be activated. If it passes the referendum, it becomes the planning policy for the Faversham Town Council area.

Once approved the Neighbourhood Plan becomes a legal document and must be considered when Swale Council decides whether to approve planning applications. In other words, it can empower us as a community to shape future development.

I was invited to join the steering group in a personal capacity and the society's board gave permission for me to do so in May 2020. The board recorded its independence on the neighbourhood plan and I did not represent the society on the steering group.

The meeting on 20 January will be chaired by our president, Richard Oldfield. If the board decides to make any representation on the neighbourhood plan it will do so at the board meeting on 31 January, and I will withdraw from the meeting while the board discusses its representation.

In addition to the members' meeting, there are public consultation meetings :

7 January Town Hall Rag 14 pop-up
(10am-12pm)

19 January Public zoom Reg 14 pop-up
(7.30pm-8.30pm)

21 January West Faversham Community
Centre Reg 14 pop-up (10am-12pm)

4 February Jubilee Centre, Whitstable
Road Reg 14 pop-up (10am-12pm)

Publishing update

LEIGH ALLISON

We've been busy in the publishing group, digitising some of the more popular Faversham Papers with the aim of improving the quality of the images.

You can now download some of them directly from our website and we aim to increase the list of papers available this year over the coming year. Apart from saving a tree, the downloads are also cheaper to buy!

Check out our store (favershamsociety.org/store) where you will find Hugh Perks's popular trilogy, *Sailing Smacks*, *Sailing Coasters* and *Sailing Barges*. Plus, we have the *Victorian Trail* which will help you appreciate some of the beautiful buildings in our town, plus reminiscences of Faversham in the 1930s and 1940s, a fascinating work on customs and smugglers and – for family history enthusiasts – the story of life in the workhouses of Selling, Faversham and Blean.

We also have two improved and updated papers. Our chief town guide has revised the detailed *History Trails*, which is packed with interesting facts about the town and stood the test of time, as one of the earliest papers published. There is also an updated version of the history of Arden's House and Arden's Cottage with added

photographs and detail about some of the theatrical productions that have taken place relating to the infamous murder.

Of course, all these papers are also still available to buy in paper format, from the Visitor Information Centre.

Abbey threat

HAROLD GOODWIN

The society has been concerned since January 2020 about an application to develop 180 houses on Abbeyfields (20/500015/OUT). We employed a barrister to review the application and prepare an objection on our behalf. The developer has recently responded to concerns and objections and it looks as though they will now press for a favourable decision.

The society has asked the barrister to look again at the case and to advise us on what further submission we might make. Please consider objecting.

The society considers that the Conservation and Design Team in Swale Council's planning department has erred in its assessment of the harm that the proposal set out within the application has upon the former Royal Abbey of St Saviour – better known as Faversham Abbey, a scheduled monument – the medieval buildings and the surviving landscape associated with the abbey and its monastic farm, Abbey Farm.

A number of heritage assets survive locally to the site including a number of Grade I, II and II* buildings – some of which have a direct link with Faversham Abbey and others which are important to understand the development of the town.

The society considers that, contrary to the assessment by the Conservation and Design Team, the application poses

substantial harm to the significance of the scheduled monument, the heritage assets within the locality of the site and the conservation area by the near-final erosion of the historic environment with the removal of the site as an important area of open farmland, leading out into the open countryside into which Faversham Abbey and the town were originally developed.

The proposal represents the destruction of an important and significant area of open land that evidences the remaining link between the scheduled monument and the historic built centre and the open countryside.

This has a direct, and adverse, impact on the historic setting of Faversham Abbey and the historic centre of the town.

Should the society's assessment of harm not be accepted, and it remains felt that the harm posed is "less than substantial" then the public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm identified. The site subject to this application should not be an "easy way" to assist Swale to deliver 180 homes simply because of its location to the town. Real care needs to be taken in assessing the proposal's impact on the heritage assets. This is a requirement set out within statute and the National Planning Policy Framework – and is discussed in what follows.

The application should be refused, because of the harm it would cause to the historic environment. This is without prejudice to the other cogent and valid reasons for refusing permission advanced by the Faversham Society and others.

The grounds for our objection can be found on our policy blog.

[favershamsociety.org/
submission-on-abbey-fields/](https://favershamsociety.org/submission-on-abbey-fields/)

Fieldwork conference

Kent Archaeological Society Fieldwork Conference this year has the theme of Anglo-Saxon and Early Medieval Monasticism. It will be held at Grimond Building, at the University of Kent at Canterbury, from 9.30am on 12 January.

Speakers include Gabor Thomas (speaking on Lyminge); Andrew Richardson (the Lossenham project); Martin Crowther (Maison Dieu project, Dover); Jacob Scott (from Rochester Cathedral); Warwick Rodwell (Canterbury Cathedral Cosmati pavement); and Tim Allen (Deal Saxon cemetery).

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/kas-fieldwork-conference-2023-tickets-483702175227

Stinky subway solution

One of our members has asked what can be done to ensure that subway from The Mall to Preston Street is kept clean of litter and the stench of urine. This is the responsibility of Swale Council and there are three ways you can try to an issue like this addressed.

- ❖ Call Swale on 01795 417850 or use their online contact form.
- ❖ Report the problem on Fix My Street (www.fixmystreet.com)
- ❖ Contact your Swale ward councillor. You can find their names in the town council newsletter.

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 12 Market Place, Faversham. 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.

All content © the Faversham Society.

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 shut until the February half-term.

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 now shut for winter.

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