

Faversham Society Newsletter

January 2020

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The bridge is raised



Alex Law captured the lifting of the creek swing bridge on 9 December. His short video <https://youtu.be/BFmcqpahKeQ> is well worth watching. See page 5

Chairman's column

HAROLD GOODWIN

Pat Reid's talk at the Market Inn on 27 November, *How We Found the Saxons*, was a great success, with standing room only and lots of new faces attending.

Many showed an interest in doing some more digging in the garden of the Market Inn next season. It will be interesting to see where the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group decides to dig in 2020.

The success of this talk made me wonder whether there are other opportunities for us to present talks at other venues in the town – we may get to

new audiences that way. Any ideas? Please get in touch.

It was a real treat to be at the premiere of Geoff Sandiford's *Our Beautiful Town* on 29 November. Geoff's previous Faversham musical, *The Skate Boys*, is well established in the local repertoire, and *Our Beautiful Town*, which was inspired by Christine Rayner's book, *50 Years of the Faversham Society 1962-2012*, is likely to achieve the same status. Christine reviews the production on page 3. Geoff has three more performances in January. Don't miss them.

The fuss in the local and national newspapers about the future of the

Faversham copy of the Magna Carta was a storm in a teacup. For years the Magna Carta was not recognised and not valued for what it is. I've been told that many people handled it and at one stage there was Blu Tack on the back of it.

Since its importance and value has been recognised it has spent most of the time locked away in an archive vault at KCC in Maidstone. The storm started when Brian Pain asked a question at the public consultation meeting about the future of No 12 Market Place, Faversham Town Council's offices.

As is the style of consultation meetings, the chair replied that the council would be considering all options. That is the way to run an open and inclusive consultation.

I was present when this exchange took place and nothing was said that justified the media attention. The Faversham Society has made its views clear. "The society's view is, to quote William Morris, that 'We are only the trustees for those who come after us.' It is not for us to sell the Magna Carta. The option of lending the Magna Carta for exhibition for short periods abroad is worthy of serious consideration. This would raise revenue which could be used for heritage in Faversham, and it could encourage people to visit Faversham."

The two Open Faversham weekends in July are an opportunity to engage the whole community in displaying, sharing and celebrating our town's rich heritage. We are hoping to engage music and drama groups, schools, writers, photographers artists, – the whole community – with us in celebrating these heritage weekends in July.

In 2020 we are focusing on two themes Victorian Faversham – with the coming of the railway and the expansion of the town – and gunpowder. We are assuming that

DIARY

Ends 22 December Christmas bazaar, Fleur gallery, 10.30am-3.30pm. See page 7

26 December Boxing Day walk, meet at the Guildhall, 10.30am

28 December *Christmas Walking with History* tour, 10.30am

14 January *Our Beautiful Town*, by Geoff Sandiford Guildhall, 7.30pm. Tickets £5 from the Fleur. See page 3

15, 16 January *Our Beautiful Town*, Fleur hall, 7.30pm. Tickets £5 from the Fleur

30 January Open Faversham members and guests, Fleur hall, 7.30pm. No ticket needed. See page 6

21 March One-day Historic Swale conference on the Swale, Swale and our Identity. Plus heritage fair, Appleyard, Sittingbourne

there will be two themes each year and perhaps on a five-year cycle so that we would return to gunpowder and Victorian Faversham in 2024.

On Thursday, 30 January, we shall be holding a members' and guests' meeting in the Fleur hall at 7.30pm to share ideas about this year's Open Faversham. Please come along. See page 6.

May I take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their work during the year. Without you, the society would not be able to "Cherish the past, adorn the present, and create for the future." May I wish all our volunteers and members a happy and healthy 2020.

harold@haroldgoodwin.info



Geoff Sandiford and his band pay tribute to a beautiful and inspiring town

A beautiful performance

CHRISTINE RAYNER

A proud heritage of preservation and restoration was celebrated in music and song at the premiere of Geoff Sandiford's delightful homage to the Faversham Society's beginnings, 57 years ago.

Geoff, a Lancastrian who came to live in the town in the 1980s, was inspired to write the musical after reading my history of the society, published to mark its golden anniversary in 2012.

Geoff's small band of musicians – he plays guitar, banjo and ukulele, his son Dominic on percussion, Dominic Abrams on guitar and mandolin and Al Clark on harmonica – performed *Our Beautiful Town* at its premiere in the Gospel Mission Hall. The programme of 15 songs in a number of rhythms

and styles each told an aspect of the society's story.

The songs were accompanied by atmospheric photographs from the era, projected by Geoff's wife, Jeanie. Some had not been included in the book – notably several from the family album of the former society chairman Jaqui Hitchcock (who was in the audience). The pictures, showing her, her husband Vincent and their four daughters, beautifully illustrated the song *The English Bullfighter*.

The premiere raised £342, which has been donated to the Faversham Food Bank. Geoff and his friends will be back to perform in the Guildhall on Tuesday, 14 January and the following two nights in the Fleur Hall. All shows start at 7.30pm. Tickets are £5 from the Fleur and proceeds will be shared between the band and the society.

Volunteering opportunities

Help in any of the following areas would be much appreciated:

Customer service People to staff our Visitor Information Centre and shop, second-hand bookshop, museum reception and gallery stewards. Previous experience is not essential.

Stewards Our museum and the Chart Mills Gunpowder Works both need stewards to assist members of the public. Familiarisation and training is not onerous and will be provided.

Town guides There is no script to learn; enthusiasm for our town is sufficient. Training proceeds at your own pace and you are encouraged to include your own anecdotes and personality. If you don't enjoy it, our customers won't either.

Curators, archivists, historians, librarians, and archaeologists Enthusiasm and an interest will get you started; any training necessary will help you, and us, to proceed. Any skills and experience will be gratefully accepted.

Media communication skills Experience and contacts with all media areas, whether in print, broadcast or online are especially welcome.

Admin and IT support Come and hide around the back and make the front appear most efficient. We are always grateful for assistance with minute taking. Committees meet monthly during daytime and evenings. Giving up two hours a month will make these meetings run so much better.

Social media skills (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and website update/design) will enable us to interact better with customers and potential visitors.

Open Faversham and Open Gardens The success of these events is ensured by planning and communication during the year and stewards on the days.

Interested? Contact Harold Goodwin: harold@haroldgoodwin.info



Adorning the present, thanks to Faversham Gunpowder WI. This knitted winter scene has been delighting customers at Faversham's post office

Bridge raised and inspected

HAROLD GOODWIN

Faversham's creek bridge was finally lifted off late on 9 December for inspection to see if it could be repaired. The inspection will take some time and a temporary bridge is to be installed to retain this important link across the waterway.

The first pedestrian bridge, probably made from wood, was installed across the creek in 1798 by the Board of Ordnance, whose Home Gunpowder Works stretched from north of Ospringe Street to the creek head. It is not clear whether this bridge was lifted, swung or slid out of the way when vessels needed to reach the basin.

In 1843, as part of the creek improvement programme, the new Faversham Navigation Commission replaced the bridge with a substantial iron one, and also rebuilt the sluice. It was still only a footbridge, described as "working on the sliding principle, worked by a windlass and weighted at one end to preserve its balance".

The current swing bridge, which is hydraulically operated, was opened at a cost of £1,500 in 1878, and, for the first time, vehicles could cross.

When the bridge and sluice were overhauled in 1996, Medway Ports Authority "donated" £23,000 towards the total £43,000 cost, the remainder being covered by contributions of £6,000 each from Kent County Council, Swale Council and the Hatch Charity, and £2,000 from the town council.

We remain hopeful that an opening bridge will be installed in 2021 so that the regeneration of the creek and restoration of our heritage can be realised.

A journal of our past

STEPHEN RAYNER

Next year, the Faversham Society will be launching a new history publication, free for members.

The *Faversham Journal*, a sister publication to this newsletter, will be full of features examining the long and

distinguished past of our town and surrounding area.

As well as a piece on new exhibits in the society's museum collection, we plan to include items on Otterden, the history of Cleve Hill, which is now threatened by a gigantic power-generating plan, King Stephen's Castle, the Dolphin Hotel, the Vaults pub, Recreation Ground, Faversham Institute, and some of Arthur Percival's history projects.

The *Journal* will be printed and produced professionally and will be free to society members, but also on sale to the public. The first issue is due (we hope) at Easter.

If you would like to submit a feature, contact me, the editor, on Favnewsletter@gmail.com.

Maypole memories

PETER STEVENS

The reference last month to the Maypole in Market Street reminded me that a manager of that shop in the 1920s and 1930s was Albert Howell who, when he left the company, bought Ye Olde Abbey Stores at 70 Abbey Street, one of five shops in the street, where he traded as A Howell & Sons.

In the First World War he served as a gunner in The Buffs and in 1939 he enlisted in the RAF and served as a flight sergeant. His two sons, Jack and William, also served in the RAF. The elder son, Jack, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1941 and was presented it by the King but five days later was killed on a bombing raid.

The younger son, Bill, who later ran the shop with his mother, was a keen footballer and was captain of Faversham Town Football Club.

More details can be found in the

Faversham Paper AF 81, *A Second Look at Abbey Street*.

Open town, open minds

HAROLD GOODWIN

Open Faversham launches in 2020 – and we would like to hear your ideas.

On Thursday, 30 January, we shall be holding a members' and guests' meeting in the Fleur hall at 7.30pm to share ideas about this year's Open Faversham.

Please spread the word to anyone you think might be interested and pass on any contacts. If you are at all interested in either the railway and Victorian Faversham or our gunpowder history, come along.

Open Faversham will each year invite residents and visitors to share in a celebration of aspects of our heritage through guided walks, visits, music, drama, talks, displays and exhibitions. Themes will change from year to year and may repeat perhaps every four or five years. We are planning two weekends each year in mid-July. We hope to attract people from further afield and to create opportunities for evening talks and performances.

For 2020 we are planning two weekends with opening events, talks or performances, on Friday evening. Here they are:

11 July The Coming of the Railway to

Faversham, for railway buffs and social historians. We have at least one exhibition which can be mounted.

12 July Victorian Faversham – houses,

streets, public buildings and the Recreation Ground. We hope the Rec's restoration will be complete by then.

18 July Gunpowder in the town – the industrial archaeology, the housing for the workers, the owners and the managers, their houses and lives.

19 July The Gunpowder works on the

marsh and the great explosion.

If you would like to be involved with one or more of these days, know of others who might, or have contacts with whom we should be in touch, within or beyond Faversham, please email me *on harold@haroldgoodwin.info* or call 01795 532737.

Planning committee

ANNE SALMON

A number of applications were considered by the Planning Committee and the following comments will be submitted to the society's board for consideration:

19/505237/full, 17 Nelson Street, replacement of aluminium windows with timber sashes. The replacement is welcomed. However, more details need to be included to ensure that they fit the character of the terrace.

19/505726/full, land next to Toachim House, 2A South Road, two-bedroom home. This is welcomed. The design is imaginative and would make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, and it provides additional town centre accommodation.

19/505582/full, Westgate House, 21 Horselees Road, Boughton, outline for six houses and one bungalow. This should be refused because the layout of the site is very cramped and much denser than is characteristic of the area. Parking and access would be difficult and spaces tight. Fewer houses on this site might be preferable.

19/505399/full, 5 Chapel Road, replacement of nine aluminium windows with UPVC. The site is in a conservation area covered by an Article 4 direction, and other windows in the street are in timber. Therefore, the windows should be replaced by timber.

19/505962/LBC, 38 Stone Street, removal of

a chimney stack. The property is listed, the chimney makes a positive contribution to its character, and is part of the original construction. The loss of this chimney would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

19/505833/full & 19/505832/LBC, Flint Barn, 22a Nightingale Road, conversion of agricultural building to two-bedroom house and external alterations. The principle is acceptable. However, it would be preferable if the number of additional windows were reduced. It is important that an open aspect towards the building should be maintained from Nightingale Road because of the positive contribution that this listed building makes to the conservation area.

19/503278/full, land east of Ham Road, approval of reserved matters for 26 houses nine flats. A public footpath runs from Ham Road to Broomfield Road along the south side of the site. Access to this footpath should be provided from within the site near the block of flats as originally shown, to ensure that residents have easier walking routes into Faversham.

Gifts to be loved again

WENDY CLARKE

The bookshop team is opening a small pre-loved gift shop in the Fleur gallery, Preston Street, from 10.30am to 3.30pm until 22 December. Do come and have a look, there will be bargain gifts and curio items of all kinds, gifts and stocking fillers.

All donations gratefully accepted. If you have any unwanted presents, bric-a-brac, toys, artwork or vintage items, please bring them into the second-hand bookshop in Gatefield Lane. We can collect if heavy.

FAVERSHAM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



The Faversham Society Newsletter is edited by Stephen Rayner. Contributions are welcomed, and should be received by midday on the 15th of the month before publication, preferably by email to favnewsletter@gmail.com or at the Fleur de Lis, 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8NS, marked for newsletter editor. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Faversham Society or of the editor. 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. If interested, please email the editor. Cheques should be made payable to the Faversham Society and sent to Jan West at the address above.

DIGITAL EDITION

Please consider saving the society printing costs by receiving your newsletter by email. Contact the membership secretary at fleurmam@hotmail.com.

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FAVERSHAM SOCIETY OPENING



The Fleur de Lis museum, 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham ME13 8NS, is open 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday; and 10am-1pm on Sunday. The gallery is open 10am-4pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 1pm-4pm Tuesday and Thursday; and 10am-1pm Sunday.

01795 590726

fleurmuseum@tiscali.co.uk

The Fleur de Lis visitor information centre and book and gift shop are open 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday and Sunday 10am-1pm.

01795 534542

ticfaversham@btconnect.com

The Fleur de Lis second-hand bookshop at 1a Gatefield Lane is open 10am-3.30pm, Monday to Saturday and 11am-2pm Sundays. 01795 590621

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

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