From the chairman
HAROLD GOODWIN
It was suggested at the society’s annual meeting that we consider offering talks over the internet. Clive Foreman has offered to provide one early next year on cycling, I hope that others will offer too.

Jane Secker, who recently moved to Faversham for Bromley, has kindly offered to give us the opportunity to hear about how a video about H. G. Wells and his connections to Bromley was produced. The video they made can be found on the Faversham Society’s website home page. More details on page 4.

With this in mind, I have arranged an online conference to discuss whether we should produce a series of short videos about aspects of Faversham’s history. The Zoom conference will be held on 23 November. Email chair@favershamsociety.org to receive your login. If you can’t make this date, please email me with your comments.

At the AGM, Sue Davidson raised the critical issue that not everyone uses the internet and that human face-to-face contact is sorely missed. I share that concern. I miss it, too. All my tourism work has moved online, and this month I have important events becoming virtual, too. In a normal year, they take place face-to-face at ExCeL, the exhibition and convention centre in London.

It is not the same. However, it does have the saving grace that people from all over
the world can participate. Our AGM, for example, had the highest attendance for many years.

Covid-19 is still with us, and it looks to be worsening again. I am pleased that the Fleur/Visitor Information Centre is now open longer hours (see page 7) and we are grateful to the volunteers who are keeping open our two “shops”, although they are, of course, more than mere retail outlets. There are some very attractive, good value, gifts available including the My Beautiful Town CD from Geoff Sandiford (see page 6) and the 2021 calendar (see page 7) for which the photographs were provided by Mary Ransom. We are grateful to Geoff and Mary for their support of the society’s work.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan continues. There is detailed coverage in the current edition of Faversham Eye. There are opportunities to develop two new heritage areas arising from the Neighbourhood Plan – TS Hazard, Town Quay, and the engine sheds and turntable near the Long Bridge. The society should aim to lead on these, and I would welcome your help with this – join me if you would like to be part of this new initiative. Details of the meeting on 19 November are on page 3. Join me if you can.

I end on a sad note. Two irreplaceable and inspiring members of the Faversham Society, Jean Duchin and Hugh Perks, have died. A short appreciation of Jean appears on page 6 and we will carry a tribute to Hugh in the next issue.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Elvers on the run
MATTHEW HATCHWELL
In March 2019, a friend who publishes British Wildlife magazine asked me to contribute 5,000 words on the work I had just started to improve access for migrating glass eels to the freshwater habitat of Stonebridge Pond and the Westbrook beyond.

The article has just been published and can be downloaded from the British Wildlife
website at tinyurl.com/FavEels.

At the time, 5,000 words sounded quite a challenge, but I soon realised it was a great opportunity not only to increase awareness of the plight of the European eel – the most trafficked wildlife species in the world and the only critically endangered species that is normally resident in Faversham — but also to highlight conservation work here in Kent by documenting the process we went through to install eel passes on the two sluices at the head of Faversham Creek.

The sluices in question are in the Stonebridge Allotments, and so gaining access to them, organising night visits to observe incoming elvers on the spring tides, and designing and building appropriate “bristle boards” to make it easier for elvers to complete their 5,000km journey from the Sargasso Sea, required co-ordination with a surprising range of different bodies.

By the time we installed the boards in March this year, just in time for the 2020 elver run, the article was largely a question of recounting the experience of the previous 12 months.

The next step is to assess other barriers to the movement of elvers and eels, both onto Faversham and Oare creeks as well as elsewhere in Medway and Swale.

According to the Environment Agency, there are more than 15,000 unadapted barriers in England and Wales, so there’s no shortage of work to be done!

**The bells, the bells**

HAROLD GOODWIN

You will have noticed that the bells of St Mary of Charity Church have fallen silent. I live nearby and miss their punctuation of the week. The bells have been removed to

---

**RECLAIMING OUR HERITAGE**

Here are some opportunities for developing Faversham's heritage.

The society would like to work with others to bring TS Hazard (above) and the Town Quay back into the ownership of the town through a trust or something similar.

There are also opportunities to conserve and bring back into some form of use the engine and carriage sheds and the turntable, which are overgrown and semi-derelict near the Long Bridge over the railway line.

These buildings are all important parts of our heritage but they have been neglected.

If you are interested in the future of these buildings, please join Harold Goodwin in a Zoom meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday, 19 November. Email chair@favershamsociety.org and Harold will send you the link.
be retuned and should be back for Christmas.

Two additional bells are being added to create a peal of 10. A generous bequest has made this work possible. The clock will now chime the hour and quarters with the Westminster chime – the same as Big Ben.

The first quarter will be marked by four notes, the half by eight and the third quarter by eight. On the hour 16 notes will be followed by a toll on the deep tenor bell for each hour between 8am and 8pm. I can’t wait!

**Feversham gift**

**PAUL MOORBATH**

The Faversham Society has been given a copy of *Arden of Feversham* published in 1762.

The anonymous play (our copy’s title page is pictured) was first published in 1592 and tells the true story of the murder of Thomas Arden by his wife and two hired assassins and their discovery and punishment.

The murder took place in Arden’s House in Abbey Street and is based on an account in *Holinhed’s Chronicle* of 1577. The play is important in the history of drama as it is the first domestic play. At least one historian suggests it is the first whodunit.

Previously, plays were about Biblical characters or ancient Greek and Roman gods and legendary figures or kings and queens but in this play all the characters are ordinary folk. It predates *Merry Wives of Windsor*. It is also intriguing in that the authorship is unknown and disputed but the 2016 edition of *The Oxford Shakespeare* says that it was written by Shakespeare with someone else – a view discussed in detail by our own former chairman, Mike Frohnsdorff. The two assassins are named as Black Will and Shakebag – get the hint/joke/clue?

The play was first published in 1592 and there were reprints in 1599 and 1633. George Lillo, an 18th-century playwright, adapted the play and sanitised it and absolved Arden’s wife, Alice, of guilt. (She had been burnt at the stake in Canterbury in 1551.) The play was staged at the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane in 1759. It was further revised by Dr J. Hoadly and finally published in London in 1762. This is the version we have here.

The copy we have was rebound in half leather last century but is in good condition.

**A virtual Faversham?**

**HAROLD GOODWIN**

Jane Secker has recently moved from Bromley and joined the Faversham Society. Before her move, she helped make a video tour of Victorian Bromley where the visionary novelist H. G. Wells grew up. The society would like to make some short films introducing the rich heritage of our town.

As I mentioned on the front page, I shall be host of a Zoom conference on Monday, 23 November, which will be discussing ways in which we might produce a series of short videos about different aspects of Faversham’s history and this will be included in the conference. Email chair@favershamsociety.org if you wish to take part.

You can watch the Bromley film online.
Bromley has celebrated its Victorian connection with H. G. Wells in a video

at any time or find it on the Faversham Society’s website behind the Virtual Faversham panel on the home page.

The pandemic meant real tours in Bromley had to be suspended, but the group was fortunate to meet a London filmmaker who offered to transform the walk into a virtual walk to be premiered on YouTube, potentially reaching a far wider audience.

In this talk, you will hear from members of Bromley Civic Society, and stars of the film, Tony Banfield (society chairman) Peter Martin (deputy chairman and chief scriptwriter) Jane Secker (former secretary, who stars as Sarah Wells, young Bertie Wells’s mum).

We hope that they will be joined by the filmmaker Mihai Andrei, founder of London Video Stories (londonvideostories.com).

The civic society will provide a short background to how it devised the walking tour and some edited highlights from the story. It will also share how members made the film and the feedback to date.

The Zoom conference will conclude with questions and a discussion about how something similar may be done in Faversham.

Bunce Court research

DEBORAH CADBURY,
I am writing a non-fiction book about the unique Bunce Court school that flourished at Otterden from 1933 to 1948. I would like to make contact with an historian who has a special interest in the Second World War in Kent who may be able to help.

For example, in September, 1939, as pupils returned for the autumn term, what might they have seen? Were barrage balloons in place on the North Downs as war broke out or was this later? Would the RAF have been flying over the area?

If you have knowledge of Kent in the early years of the war, it would be lovely to hear from you, especially if you have experience or first-hand knowledge of this unique school. Please call me on 07944 806065 or email me on deborahcadbury@compuserve.com.
Jean Duchin
SUE DAVIDSON
Jean Duchin died on Tuesday, 13 October, after a long illness. She was a huge asset to the Faversham Society: a museum steward, a Visitor Information Centre expert (as well as a gifts buyer) and her knowledge of all things Faversham-related was unsurpassed.

Jean, had a wonderful sense of humour, was daughter of Bryan Tassell, the long-serving clerk to Faversham magistrates. Our thoughts are with Steve and all the family.

Planning committee
The following plans are among those considered recently by the society’s Planning Committee. The full list can be studied at favershamsociety.org/creating-the-future/planning-committee/

Phase 2a, Faversham Lakes, Ham Road. 106 houses and apartments, with associated roads, parking and landscaping, accessed via continuation of Bethell Road and Evers Road, which will eventually meet in what will be phase 2b. Two blocks of three-storey apartments are included and the scheme will provide 30% affordable housing. Recommendation: This scheme is welcomed. The development on phase one is of a generally good standard and respects its historic setting and this scheme is a continuation of the same project.

40 Stone Street. Insertion of seven replacement UPVC front windows. Recommendation: This application should be refused because the house is within the Faversham conservation area and covered by an article 4 direction. The windows, because of their thick glazing bars, absence of horns and method of opening would harm the appearance of the building and the terrace.

Do you know why Faversham has so many historic buildings? Find out who saved much of our beautiful town from the brutal modernisation of the 1960s planners.

Geoff Sandiford’s limited edition live DVD and audio CD, based on the history of the Faversham Society by Christine Rayner – and featuring period photographs and much more – is available from the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre or direct from geoffsandiford@hotmail.com, priced £10.
2021 calendars and cards

MARY RANSOM

If you’re fed up with this year (and who isn’t?) you will be pleased to hear that calendars for 2021 are now on sale from the Visitor Information Centre priced at £5.20 which is excellent value for money. They make ideal Christmas presents.

Christmas cards featuring the Guildhall with Christmas tree are also available at 65p each or £3 for a pack of five.

Photographs are welcome for the Faversham ME13 area for possible inclusion into the calendar. The images need to show Faversham at its best. If one is selected your name will get a mention and you will be entitled to a free calendar.

Please send one best-quality jpg landscape format image per email to ransom@gmx.co.uk typing “Faversham Society calendar” in the subject line. You may send as many images as you like but please include only one per email. Include your full contact details, and where and when the photograph was taken.

Images need to be received by the end of June.

■ The Fleur shop is now open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday 10am to 1pm. It is shut on Wednesdays and but open again 10am to 4pm Friday and Saturday. The perfect times to buy your Christmas presents!
Several weeks ago, an email from Colin Relf, a Faversham resident, came to me with a photograph I had not seen before. Colin asked about the date of this photograph, which is reproduced on the front page of this newsletter.

Clearly this shows Stonebridge Ponds, viewed from the Brent Hill side. The gasworks dominates the view beyond the ponds – the big gasholder is there, so this is after 1916 when it was built (and a chunk of West Street demolished), but before gas production ceased in 1957 as the huge retort house is still very much in view. The bare trees and the large quantities of smoke being belched from chimneys tells us this is winter.

However, this gives only a broad dating and we have here a highly specific event – drastic flooding. Those of us growing up in North Kent in the post-war period will never forget the 1953 floods – overnight on 31 January, waking up on the Isle of Sheppey to a much smaller island than when we went to sleep. There have, however, been a number of other serious north Kent coast floods – in 1927 and in 1949.

So, our first question to you, reader, is do you remember the 1953 floods in Faversham, especially if they are of Stonebridge Ponds? If so, we would be pleased to hear your memories of how dramatic they were.

There was, however, something that for me was even stranger – a residential property right in the middle of what had been the gunpowder Home Works. Seeing the ponds on old maps and in early aerial photos, I had assumed that the building shown had an industrial function. The image above shows a close-up of these cottages, which look as if built in the 1830s. They are mentioned in the tithe map details of 1839, though sadly we are not told who lived in them, just that they are owned by Hall’s Gunpowder Company. To the right in the picture is a small building which, according to Arthur Percival’s map,
is the watch house. What seems extraordinary is that these cottages are within 100 metres of the powder magazine and, even more threatening, the corning house where the huge 1781 explosion occurred.

The truth seems to be that by the 1820s, the Home Works was easing back on production, with new premises established in 1786 after the explosion wrecked the town. These start-ups were out on Marshside, where in 2020 the Lakeside development is being built. Then in 1873 the explosives works at Uplees were founded.

Although the Home Works were not officially closed until 1925, in fact little explosive was being made there after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. St Ann’s House, the Home Works storekeeper’s house upstream from the Stonebridge Ponds, became a charming
“country house” in the later 19th century. It is interesting that the cottages are also next to the former watch house, marked on the colourful 1867 map of Stonebridge left to us by Arthur Percival (right).

Who lived in these cottages? We have been lucky in that one of our members has a great-great grandfather, who lived in these cottages. Pauline Miles tells us about her ancestor:

“My great-great grandfather, George Wraight (born 1828) married Frances Jemmett and he was a labourer in the powder mills and lived in one of the cottages. His wife, I was told, had the job of boiling up the ink in a copper which was used to paint the numbers on the barrels of gunpowder. As you may know they used punts to transfer the barrels around the works and many years later my dad – Edward George Wraight (always known as Jim or Jimmy) – used to court my mother in those punts.

“Going back to the cottages, I can remember at the age of about three being taken to the cottage to visit a very old lady on her deathbed – I remember a skeleton-like figure with wisps of grey hair. Now she could not have been my great-grandmother as the dates do not tie in, so who she was I don’t know, maybe a sister? I will never know.”

George Wraight’s birthdate of 1828 fits well with him living in the cottages (built in about the 1830s) as a working adult.

What happened to those cottages? They were demolished just before 1960, having been severely damaged by the 1953 floods. The aerial photographs on the right show the same aerial view of the Ponds taken in 1940 and 1960. The cottages are easy to pinpoint in the 1940 aerial photo but by 1960 they have gone. Is there anything left nowadays to show where they were?

Several members of the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group (FSARG) have allotments at Stonebridge Pond and have made inquiries of the those who now cultivate the spot where the cottages stood.

Sadly, and rather surprisingly, no
Left: this 1867 map with cottages clearly shown (circled)
Below: an aerial view in 1940 (left) shows the cottages but in 1960 (right) the cottages have gone

evidence has been reported by those allotment owners – perhaps the cottages were built with only a single line of brick as foundation. We have found traces of foundationless houses in Faversham although these houses were usually weatherboarded whereas the Stonebridge cottages look like good-quality brickwork. Still, the Stonebridge cottages stood on waterlogged ground and excavating foundations would have been near-impossible.

This, you may think, has only been a small-scale inquiry but look at how it has ranged from the Napoleonic wars to the 1953 floods, from Halls Gunpowder Company to the labourer George Wraight, from explosives to allotment vegetables. And all starting from one mystery photograph.

This inquiry was a joint effort from Colin Relf and his cousin Mrs Nye, John and Caroline Clarkstone, Nigel Mannouch, Chris Wootton, Pauline Miles, and John Robertson
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 favnnewsletter@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 fleurmem@hotmail.com.

---

The Faversham Society is Registered Charity No 1135262 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales No 7112241. www.favershamsociety.org