Chairman’s column

HAROLD GOODWIN

As some of you know, I have been away in India working on responsible tourism there with states and national government. In my absence, the Faversham Society board was chaired by David Melville and I was pleased to hear that Leigh Allison – our membership secretary and much more – has been co-opted to the board. I hope that she will be elected in May at the annual general meeting. The AGM notice is on pages 8-9.

Chris Wright has given excellent service to the society over many years and most recently on the board, and I thank him for it. His wisdom and technical expertise in transport planning has been invaluable to us as we have engaged with the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan and the Swale Local Plan. I am sorry to see him go from the board but very relieved that we shall continue to have his knowledge and support through the Environment and Planning Committee, where he makes an important contribution.

We continue to fight to save Abbey Fields from housing development. I understand that it is to go to the Swale Council planning committee next month. Jonathan Carey, Ray Harrison and I continue to do what we can to support our barrister, who will be making another submission on our behalf. Once it is finalised, I shall post it on our website in the policy blog on our website.

Edward Garraway, Mayor of Faversham in 1854, and possessor of impressive whiskers, is featured in Faversham Paper No 1, The Mayoralty, now online.

See page 4

John Owen has written an obituary to mark Margaret Slythe’s contribution through fundraising to developing what we now know as the Fleur complex. Her work was hugely important to the growth and success of the Faversham Society, and we shall always be grateful to her for it.

The John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust was one of the many groups approached by Margaret to fund the development of the Fleur, and I am pleased to say that the
Swire Trust continues to do so, with £2,500 annually.

Last week, with the Friends of St Mary of Charity, we launched Open Faversham. It will run from 12 to 20 August. Please encourage groups across the town and villages to take part in a celebration of our communities and activities, as well as our cultural, lived, natural, and built heritage. Open Faversham will be co-created by all those who take part. See page 6.

Faversham Town Council is campaigning to get the government to take action to require Peel Ports to restore a moveable bridge, which is essential to realise the ambition in the Neighbourhood Plan to regenerate the upper creek. See page 6.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Margaret Slythe (1933-2023)

JOHN OWEN

The death of Margaret Slythe, aged 90, sees the passing of one of the most significant “second generation” members of the Faversham Society. It is due to her tenacity that so much of the society’s complex in Preston Street exists.

Margaret was brought up in Maidstone, educated at the girls’ grammar school there and from an early age developed a passion for history, which led subsequently to an MA. She was especially interested in material culture. She was intrigued by the built environment wherever she was, which included many European sites targeted on family holidays.

She had an abiding commitment to archives, libraries and museums for their fundamental importance in interpreting the past. She believed material culture should be available to all to appreciate and so to inform and to enrich lives.

Her professional life as a librarian-archivist-researcher led her to work in Dorset and Saltwood Castle, Kent. Here she found the collection of Lord Clark, the art historian who presented Civilisation on BBC television, an inspiration and a sanctuary of culture.

She, husband Vincent and son Ben moved to Faversham in 1971. They bought their medieval house in Abbey Street at a time when much was semi-derelict and conservation was still in “the heroic stage”. With the exception of the Colebrooks on the other side of the road – likewise great supporters of the Faversham Society – there were few fellow spirits.

It was in the 1990s that Margaret, with more time, came to focus on the future of the collections and hence premises of the Faversham Society. One was growing too large and the other too small. She “put stuffing” into the society’s council, which was nervous about any big commitment.

The opportunity came with the offer of 11 Preston Street, but at a substantial price. Margaret singlehandedly formulated a budget, which left some shortfalls to chance, but set about courting charitable funds for grants.

Her attention to well-argued detail and revisions, in her distinctive small round handwriting in black ink, to address donors’ questions achieved the target.

The next step was to plan joining the rear of 11 Preston Street to 13 Preston Street and then agreeing the complete refit of the expanded museum and the Tourist Information Centre and shop. Once again, she drafted a budget, set about fundraising and answering all the demands of the Heritage Lottery Fund application.

More money was needed for setting out the garden and restoring and housing the
Cards galore
Looking for some different greeting cards or notelets? The Faversham Society has a great selection on sale in the Visitor Information Centre featuring local artists.

Laura Grace Haines has some wonderful drawings of our famous buildings, with some also available as prints.

Sue King has been on a mission, painting some of the local pubs, but she also has different work available as framed prints. Larger, eye-catching, prints are also on display in the Visitor Centre.

Jeannie Sandford has painstakingly recreated our recognisable buildings in mosaic. Some are pictured. These are also available as mugs and make very nice gifts.

We have some of Ellie Beer’s images of boats and a selection from Nigel Wallace of White One Sugar, a change from his usual style.

Cards are priced from £2 to £2.50 and it’s very useful to keep a supply just in case you need one!

shopfront recovered from America. She set to on that and on one occasion funded temporarily a shortfall personally to ensure completion.

Soon after, 12 Preston Street, which joined the two parts of the society’s site, came up for sale. Once again, she set to on a budget and raised money needed for extensions.

Many small projects, such as the Trafalgar exhibition in 2005 or management report on the society, which needed the odd £10,000, were dealt with by her. More recently she used her dedication to raise money for the Maison Dieu.

Margaret never wanted to be – nor was – on the society’s council. Nor did she chair a committee or become an officer of the society. She was a committed independent spirit who just got on with what she believed needed to be done. In total, she probably raised £750,000.

Her lasting contribution to the Faversham Society was based on ethos and action. Without her determined, slightly steely, self-effacing manner the Faversham
More history goes online
LEIGH ALLISON
As part of our work to update the Faversham Papers, we’ve looked at which publications we can put online, with free access for everyone. The Gunpowder Workers Index was the first online and has proved very popular, with comments received from Scotland and Canada.

Next up is Faversham Paper No 1, The Mayoralty. Originally written in 1964, but now brought up to date with a huge amount of information relating to what was actually going on in the town, in each of the years since the first-known mayor, Robert Dod, in 1256.

To access it, there is a new History tab on the main menu that takes you to a new section of the website. See favershamsociety.org/a-history-of-faversham

We previously added the Timeline, favershamsociety.org/faversham-timeline, to complement the Brief History of Faversham book.

Now, you can follow the story of the mayors and their trials and tribulations.

We are lucky enough to have photographs of the Victorian mayors, and detailed information from the chamberlain’s accounts and other sources, for some of the earliest mayors.

For example, who wouldn’t want this on their epitaph today, 600 years later?

“He here Ieth inried the bodye of William Hills who dyed in that yeare hee was Mayor of this towne, he had issue by Katherine his wife, 7 sons and 7 daughters. Hee departed this life the 26 of March 1651 aged 46 years.”

Baron, he did his work truly; And though dwelling at Feversham, born was at Throughleigh; On Epiphany day, fourteen hundred and fourteen; To the Church, in a coffin, Semanus was brought in; The years of Semanus were just eight times ten; May his pathway to heaven be certain.”

In the mid to late 1500s, payments were made to entertain royalty, their jesters, trumpeters, players and minstrels. There’s also an intriguing entry to pay the “Queen’s bereward”. This is the person that looks after the Queen’s bear – presumably, the bear came too!

Mayors from the early 1600s show up today in street names – so if you live in Preston, Napleton, Caslocke, Menfield roads, check them out. Interestingly, the mayor of 1632 had cause to complain to government about the state of what is now the A2 – nothing much changes!

The epitaph of John Caslocke – He whome ye good did love, ye bad did feare – made me think of the theme tune for the Robin Hood television series of the 1950s! But it has a sad ending.

“He that with zeale did oft frequent this place: He that with grave respect ye bench did grace: He that for justice was ye most servere: He whome ye good did love, ye bad did feare: Hee that by virtuous wife had hopeful race: that lived to see their sonne in father’s place: that fourty yeares and borne ye marriage yoake lo here’s interred but death’s attendinge stroke, and that’s most strainge, ere much
they gan to wither envious death
surpriz’d them both togeather for
both tooke leave, a thing not often
scene of world’s delights, and but
fewer dais betweene like doleful turtle
having lost her mate, made all of love,
she moaning yeelds to fate. As if she
vow’d that palefac’d death with
sworde should not devide them ne
from bed nor borde from bed: for
both rest in still sleeping tombe
waiting ye last, & saints most joyful
dome from borde: for both set down
(wher angels gather ye guests) in

Heav’n, at board with Isaac’s father”

Snippets from 1782 and 1783 show us the
brutal punishments meted out for what
now seem trivial crimes.

Also, the inequality of society, if the
silver plate listed in the mayor’s will of 1791
is anything to go by. From the 1800s we can
see what some of the mayors looked like.
Sideburns were definitely having a moment
in the 1850s and 1860s!

Were any of these your ancestors? Please
let us know if you have extra information
we can add.

Favnewsletter@gmail.com
Society would not have much of what we take for granted today.

**Sign the bridge petition**

**HAROLD GOODWIN**

A new bridge and sluice gates will benefit the whole town, bringing new boats, visitors and life to that part of Faversham. It will also support the economy of the town.

In 2021, Faversham Town Council obtained legal advice saying that Peel Ports (as the successor of the Medway Ports Authority) had a legal duty to maintain the bridge. Peel Ports has refused to accept this or to make any repairs.

The legal advice also stated that the government has the power to make Peel Ports fulfil this duty. In August, 2021, the town council wrote to the transport secretary asking him to use this power and has written several times since. He has never given a substantive reply.

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill, a resident of Faversham, has raised the issue twice in the House of Lords on behalf of the town council. This led a minister to say, in November, 2022, that matters were still “under review”.

The government still refuses to take action and appears to be protecting Peel Ports at Faversham’s expense.

https://favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk/community/creek-bridge-campaign/

**Open Faversham**

**HAROLD GOODWIN**

Before Covid, the Faversham Society planned to launch Open Faversham on two...
Should you like to know more about our town twinning group and the programme of events both social and cultural planned for this year or perhaps be tempted to join, please email Richard Shipman at the address below. Equally, if you are part of an interest group or youth group and would like to consider contacting an equivalent in Hazebrouck, we would be delighted to facilitate such an approach.

Favershamtowntwinning@gmail.com
Notice is hereby given that the 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Faversham Society will be held in the Assembly Rooms, Faversham on Wednesday 24 May 2023 at 7pm.

Final details will be available in the newsletter and online, along with the AGM papers and nominations, on Tuesday, 9 May 2023.

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM and matters arising
3. Chair’s Review and receipt of the Annual Report
4. Receipt of the Annual Accounts
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner
6. Election of Trustees
7. Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair
8. President’s Review
9. Any other business
10. Date of next meeting

In accordance with the Society’s Articles of Association, nomination forms for trustees and officers will be made available on 24 April 2023 online and at the Visitor Information Centre (VIC), 12 Market Place, Faversham, Kent ME13 7AE. All members have the right to attend, speak and vote at the AGM. If you are unable to attend the AGM but wish for somebody else to vote on your behalf, a proxy form will be made available. Proxy forms will be available on the website at favershamsociety.org and from the VIC, from 9 May 2023. They must be returned to the Society no later than 7pm on the 23 May either by email to agm@favershamsociety.org or to the Visitor Information Centre, as above.

The papers of the AGM, that shall include details of all those nominated for election and the 2022 financial year’s annual report and accounts, shall be made available to all members by 9 May 2023. These, and proxy forms, will be available to download from the Faversham Society’s website at favershamsociety.org and hard copies will be available from the Visitor Information Centre, 12 Market Place, Faversham, Kent.
weekends in the summer. It was an opportunity to bring together the Faversham Museums, promote each other, and continue the idea of the long-running Open House programme, which was so successful. Sadly, we had to stop the Open House programme because of serious issues over insurance.

I, an atheist, was invited by the Vicar of Faversham, the Rev Simon Rowland, and the churchwardens to chair the Friends of St Mary of Charity. From my study window, I look out on to the church and churchyard, and I value both as part of Faversham’s built, cultural, spiritual and natural heritage. Open Faversham is being launched by the Faversham Society and the Friends of St Mary.

The church is raising funds for new lavatories and a kitchen to make the space more useful for community groups. In August, the church and churchyard at the town’s core provide a great space for activity and events.

Open Faversham will take place this year from 12 to 20 August and before then we shall promote it to ensure we maximise awareness and interest in it. Open Faversham has a website (www.openfaversham.info), although the pages are not ready yet. We are not organising, funding or insuring a festival.

Rather, we are encouraging community groups in the town and the villages around to organise events, walks, performances, recitals, reading, visits, and talks, across music, drama, history, art, natural history, the creek, sport, games (goal running perhaps?), heritage, food and beverages. Each group will be responsible for organising, funding and insuring its own activity. This is an opportunity for Faversham and the villages around to celebrate our community heritage and activities and to share them with each other and with visitors to the area. It will be in the school holidays, and so we hope that there will be activities for families and children.

If you know of any groups or individuals who may be interested, please spread the word and ask them to contact info@openfaversham.info

Conservation appraisal

HAROLD GOODWIN

The Faversham Conservation Area was created in 1971 and has not been reviewed since 2004. The review is important to ensure that the conservation area can be defended and used to ensure that development is sympathetic to our townscape.

It is important that the Conservation Area is strong and up to date, there are frequent references to it in the Neighbourhood Plan and it is essential to ensuring sympathetic development. The Conservation Area was last reviewed in 2004 – the 46 pages can be found online at www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-Forms-and-Leaflets/Planning-General/Planning-Conservation/Faversham-conservation-area-character-appraisal.pdf

An exhibition will be held in Faversham Town Hall from 20 March to 5 April. It will include drawings of the streetscapes of Faversham town centre done by Anthony Swaine Architects at one-eighth scale for the Faversham “facelift” scheme, modelled on the Civic Trust’s pioneering project for Magdalene St Norwich.

There is a Zoom session from 7pm to 8pm on Tuesday, 21 March, for you to hear
about the conservation area appraisal process and ask your questions. To join the Zoom meeting, use this link https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86585258980?pwd=Z2JYQUdOZEpVbNlHbHZaWhZTgQT09
Meeting ID: 865 8525 8980. Passcode: 673418
The meeting will be recorded and made available through our website. But if you have questions or want to assist with this initiative, please try to join the meeting.

Town in small scale
In the second half of the 1960s, Anthony Swaine, then the town’s historic building and conservation area adviser, organised for one-eighth of an inch to one foot scale (approx. 1:100 scale metric) architectural drawings of street frontages to be made.
We shall be exhibiting them at the Townscape Exhibition in Faversham Town Hall from 21 March to 5 April. They record the town centre as it was when the Conservation Area was promulgated in 1971. Many of the drawings were used to support grant applications to restore the buildings and create the remarkably well-preserved town centre we enjoy today.
Take a look at the exhibition and spot the changes – in heritage terms, some good and some bad.

Austin’s wartime diary
NICK MENGHAM
I have enjoyed reading and preparing Harold Austin’s diary for publication on the Faversham Society website. Now you can enjoy it too.
Harold Austin was a Faversham businessman who lived above his East Street wool and fancy goods shop with his wife, Hilda, and two daughters, Mary and Evelyn.
He was born in 1883 and so was in middle age when observing aerial battles above Faversham and the bombs that fell, chronicling the progress of the war overseas and the trials and challenges of the people back home. Austin began these diaries in June, 1940, and then stopped abruptly in February, 1944. And he kept his diaries a secret.

The Martyrdom Players present
Murder in the Cathedral
by T.S. Eliot
St Mary of Charity Church, Faversham
at 7.30pm on 18, 19, 20 and 21 April
www.ticketsource.co.uk
Austin’s daughter, Evelyn, joined the Faversham Society on its foundation in 1962 and was a keen supporter of its work. Upon her father’s death in 1961 she was surprised to find his wartime diaries which were written in pencil in three “Octova duplicate” books, which she donated to the society.

We are grateful to her as well as to Peter Garner who made the original transcript as Faversham Paper No 68 and contributed a foreword and footnotes.

There are more than 100 Faversham Papers, written and researched by experts, which are still very interesting and enjoyable, but the quality of the reproduction and dated appearance means that not all of them are still in print. So, I am very happy to have helped in bringing back to life this great paper. please follow the link below. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

favershamsociety.org/ 
harold-austin-war-diary-introduction

Postal charges
LEIGH ALLISON
The cost of a second-class stamp rises from 68p to 75p in April. This means we shall have to increase the annual charge for posting newsletters from £8 to £10, effective from the May renewals.

You can, of course, receive the newsletter by email or collect a printed copy from the Visitor Information Centre – both without charge.

If you pay by banker’s order, you will need to increase it by £2 directly with your bank. We do not hold any bank details, and so are not able to do this for you. I will send reminders to everyone affected before their next payment is due.

If you pay by cheque or at the Visitor Information Centre, one of our volunteers will be able to help you.

If you have any questions, or if you’d like to switch to email or collection, please get in touch. You can email membership@favershamsociety.org or call the VIC on 01795 534542 where you can leave a message for me.

The VIC, at 12 Market Place, is open from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Saturday and 10am to 1pm on Sunday.

Maison Dieu volunteers
ANN WILKINSON
The Maison Dieu Museum in Ospringe Street is looking for enthusiastic volunteers with an interest in history to join our visitor engagement team.

After your induction, you will be supported to welcome visitors, dealing with entrance fees and shop sales and have a chance to explore your own interests within this role.

The Maison Dieu was built from the 13th to 16th century and once part of a medieval pilgrimage hospital. It opened as a museum in 1925 and houses an extensive collection of local Roman artefacts as well as medieval displays.

It is open from 2pm to 5pm every weekend afternoon from Easter to the end of October.

For more information, please contact me, Ann Wilkinson, on annbw70@outlook.com.

Guides needed
After the successful opening of the Fleur de Lis Museum over February half-term and subsequent Saturdays, the society is looking to expand its team of stewards/guides.

A meeting to plan for Easter holiday and
spring opening will be held in the museum gallery from 2pm to 3.30pm on Friday, 17 March. Enter from Preston Street through the red door.

Anyone interested in finding out more is welcome to join us. We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers who enjoy talking to people of all ages. Knowledge of Faversham’s history is helpful but not essential. We operate a flexible rota, so you can commit as and when you are available.

If you can’t attend the meeting, but are interested in volunteering at the museum please contact volunteer@favershamsociety.org.

The society also needs some help in smartening up our Georgian courtyard garden to make it ready for the summer.

If anyone can spare a few hours to help, or on a regular basis, please contact us at fleurmuseum@favershamsociety.org.

**Archaeological register**

ANN WATSON

As part of Kent Archaeological Society’s approach to engage more fully with members and the public, it is in the process of creating a volunteer register. This will enable the society to make contact about the many and varied volunteering opportunities that the archaeological society can offer.

Please can you email the address below and list any particular area of interest, for example: excavations & finds handling, field walking, assisting with geophysical surveys, scanning and tagging heritage documents, photographing and logging artefacts, IT competencies, interest in historic buildings, educational content delivery.

volunteering@kentarchaeology.org.uk
There are many delights associated with working in the Fleur Bookshop, but I would like to focus on two: the dedications one comes across in donated books, and the odd bits of card and paper left inside such books. Both are a source of great interest, amusement and, on occasion, are moving and thought-provoking. I offer a few examples, preserving of course the anonymity of those who made the donations and the recipients of such books and cards.

One curious, small invitation card reads: “Emmanuel Church. Admit bearer. To tea at 6pm. At the Institute Hall. On Wed, April 26th, 1899. Lantern Lecture by Rev ____ at 7.30. Admission 6d.” Then it adds: “Tea and Lecture, 9d.” All nicely printed on a yellow background; but on the back of the card in pencil, intriguingly, the clergyman has listed a series of hymns and prayers, all carefully numbered, the first stating “Jesus Shall Reign 106.”

I presume that the Institute in question was the rather imposing building that stood at the junction of East Street and Newton Road and which was demolished soon after I first came to Faversham. John Anderson Court is now on that corner.

A philosophy book I came across boasted, inside the front cover, rather cryptically – and philosophically? – “If this is a book, then this is a dedication.” Work that one out! It might take a philosopher to do that. (We have some in the bookshop.)

Inside another book, Bernard has written on beautifully letter-headed paper: “Dear ____ , I’m sorry I let you down. I really did try to get on with Mr Trollope.” Does he mean a Trollope novel – or the man himself? No, it must be the former. The letter was dated 2016. Pity. One can imagine Bernard delighting in conversation with the heavily-bearded, bespectacled Victorian novelist himself.

The letter ends rather disarmingly: “Thank you for your kindness in lending me the book … and for the levitation. An uplifting experience.” I would love to have been there. Trollope and levitation! I thought Trollope was rather “heavy”. (Groan – Editor.)

And inside The Surgeon of Crowthorne, by Simon Winchester, tucked between pages 114 and 115, I discovered a postcard of the Seven Sisters in East Sussex.

On the back is written: “This is the spot. Quite marvellous … Children brown as berries. Hope the cats are still

Trollope: a let-down
behaving…” (The 25p stamp dates it just a little.)

Another postcard, of a fetching portrait of a Modigliani nude, caught my eye immediately. I can’t think why. The message alongside the recipient’s address and written upside down in BIG BLOCK CAPITALS, says, “What’s going on? Come here and fun out.” (“Fun out?”) And then: “Are you alive? Are you happy? (Just say no.)” I didn’t realise that Modigliani produced such an effect – or was it the nude herself? Anyway, I warmed to the wit and the existential prose.

A most beautiful and poignant postcard shows a photograph of a stunning sculpture entitled Water of Life by Stephen Broadbent, which can be found in the precincts of Chester Cathedral. The postcard fell out of a Book of Common Prayer that I was examining. I was so touched by the message that I quote it here in full: “Dear ____, This speaks to me of the giving and receiving of God’s love, or just the giving and receiving between the woman and Jesus. It might speak to you in other ways. May God be with you wherever you are and may you be with God wherever you are”. (A paraphrase of the Blessing of St Clare). Love, ____”

Even non-Christians must surely be moved by this, for it is human more than anything else but also celebrates transcendence.

Finally, and more light-heartedly, a postcard that depicts a terrifying stonework face with startling eyes, evidently a detail from the Chapelle Saint-Michel in France (it’s not clear where). The sender’s message says in part: “Dear _____, I don’t know who or what this sculpted head is meant to be, but I should warn you that, after Mum’s enthusiastic efforts with the scissors on my coiffure, it bears an uncanny resemblance to the current appearance of your own dear Papa!” Lovely!

I recall one customer coming into the Fleur Bookshop who explained that he regularly attended auctions of rare and vintage books. One book he bought contained a letter that he decided he must try to get authenticated – and he did. The letter, apparently, was from a Florence Nightingale. I’ve trawled through so many very old copies of Shakespeare’s plays but have not, as yet, happened across a letter written by the man himself.

I mentioned at the beginning that book dedications as well as cards and letters fortuitously fall out of donated books. Perhaps a few dedications unconnected with the Fleur may suffice to bring this piece to an appropriate conclusion.

First: “To Herbert Bayard Swope” (what a name!) “without whose friendly aid and counsel every line in this book was written”, by Franklin P. Adams, an American journalist. And then: “To my daughter Leonora, without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time.” The scribe? None other than the Master, P.G. Wodehouse.

Working in the Fleur Bookshop is an education in itself, and from time to time produces little gems of wit and enlightenment. Long may the postcards slip out!
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, will open on Saturdays from 11am to 3pm.

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.