

WE MUST STOP THIS PLAN. NOW

THIS IS THE TOWN'S ANCIENT HISTORY ... DON'T BUILD OVER IT

HAROLD GOODWIN

If you care about Faversham, we need your active support now to stop the development of 180 homes, on Abbeyfields, a beautiful and unspoilt part of the town's historic core.

Swale Council has convened an Extraordinary Planning Committee meeting at Swale House, Sittingbourne, at 7pm on Wednesday, 28 June.

Please be there if you can to make clear the strength of feeling in Faversham against this development and the damage it will do to our town. See below for how to protest.

The Faversham Society has requested that Swale planners consider drone footage that was shot last month. You can see it

A still from the drone footage shows the site under threat. The original medieval track that linked the Royal Abbey core to its farmland is to the right, with the medieval farmhouse just beyond

here: favershamsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Faversham-Drone-Video-highlight.mp4

This footage shows the breathtaking views across the site of the town, in its setting and out into the historic countryside, and the role the site plays in respect of the historic settings.

The opening shot looks westwards across the proposed development site for

180 houses towards the medieval core of Faversham. The original medieval track that linked the royal abbey core to its farmland, now a road, is seen to the right, with the medieval farmhouse just beyond. Further right, just out of shot, are the brickworks and the old council pumping station of 1911.

At 24 seconds, Abbeyfields Road is in the foreground, the edge of the conservation area, where the Abbey Fishpond can be seen to the right and the Grade I and Grade II* listed Abbey Barns and Grade I medieval stable in the middle distance.

The development site is on what would originally have been the abbey farmlands stretching out beyond Thorn Creek, which was the abbey's port, and on to the Blean Woodlands, which belonged to the abbey and probably supplied the timber for the barns.

At 55 seconds, there's a clear view of the Abbey Barns and to the left the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School playing fields, which cover the abbey ruins, a scheduled ancient monument. In the foreground on the left, archaeologists are digging and revealing a Roman barn. The Roman villa excavated in the 1960s, lies just to the left of the barns.

A 1 minute, we can see the playing field beyond the second line of trees, the site of the main abbey building.

At 1:06, the view swings across the narrow, unadopted road with parking on both sides. This provides the only access to the proposed development.

At 1:12 the video looks across the proposed development site to Blean Woods, showing the extent of the abbey's lands and the connection of the agricultural town of Faversham with the

countryside. This view, at ground level, would be lost, causing substantial damage to the conservation area and the listed buildings and their settings.

The Faversham Society's trustees have taken the unusual step of employing a planning barrister to make submissions on our behalf. The submissions can be found here favershamsociety.org/abbeyfields-2nd-submission and favershamsociety.org/submission-on-abbey-fields

Please also write to the Planning Committee and make your feelings known. All comments must be made in writing. Verbal comments cannot be accepted. You can submit your comments online at pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications. Or email planningcomments@midkent.gov.uk, or write to Mid Kent Planning Support, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ.

Your comments must be dated and you must provide your name and address. Anonymous comments will not usually be taken into account. State the application number and site address: 20/500015/OUT (Abbeyfields, Faversham ME13 8HS).

Tip closure And here's another protest for you to make. If you want to fight the threatened closure of the household waste centre at Salters Lane, please sign the petition in our Visitor Information Centre at 12 Market Place opposite the guildhall.

Water farce After an unusually wet winter, South East Water, the company that holds the monopoly on our water supply, is – in mid-June – unable to maintain a supply to all its “customers”. I put “customers” in quotation marks because in normal usage, the word suggests that one could go to an alternative supplier, but for our utilities, this is not so.

To page 4 ►►►

Chest worms frozen out

HEATHER WOOTTON

A Fleur Museum favourite – “the pirate’s chest” – is back on display after a chilly visit to Chatham.

The medieval chest was owned by the merchant adventurer and town benefactor Henry Hatch and in recent years had been troubled by woodworm.

The most ecological way to stop woodworm is to freeze them, and so last month we wrapped the chest in polythene and took it to a deep freeze in the conservation department at Chatham Historic Dockyard. This treatment – arranged by our museum mentor, Helen Brown, who works at the dockyard – kills woodworm and any larva.

It was a noisy journey, though – the chest’s four iron handles clanked all the way on the M2 back and forth to Chatham.

According to our records it was restored in 1982, so this journey is its first for 40 years. We do not know how far it travelled in its earlier life. It is believed to have been bought by Henry Hatch in London in 1520 from Henry Estey and is mentioned in his will.

The domed chest is clamp-fronted and one of about 16 similar chests in Kent. Another of his chests is in the vestry of St Mary of Charity Church.

Henry Hatch was born in Sundridge, near Sevenoaks. He came to Faversham before 1510. A fishmonger and merchant, he also served as a churchwarden, jurat, chamberlain and auditor.

Hatch, who lived at 12 Market Place, had lands



The chest, plastic wrapped, on its way for freezing and (below) back in the Fleur

and holdings in several areas of Kent as well as in Faversham. Upon his death in 1533, he left his estate to the town for three specific purposes: the maintenance of the creek; improvements of the town’s highways; and for ornaments at the parish church. However, the town was involved in long court battle with his widow over the inheritance.

Contrary to children’s beliefs, it did not contain doubloons plundered on the Spanish Main ... but Hatch’s papers.



CLIPPINGS FROM

The Faversham Institute,

FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF

Literature, Science, and Art.

(Established 1854, and in union with the Society of Arts.)

MONTHLY JOURNAL.

LECTURE.

A Lecture will be delivered by the Rev. ARTHUR MURSELL on Wednesday, 26th February, 1868. Subject:—"OLD WOMEN OF BOTH SEXES."

ADMISSION.—Members, Front Seats, 9d.; Central, 6d.; Back, 4d. Non-members, Front Seats, 1s. 6d.; Central, 1s.; Back, 6d.

On Wednesday Evening, February 8th, 1871,

A LECTURE

WILL BE DELIVERED BY

MISS EMILY FAITHFULL,

ENTITLED.

"The Position and Claims of Women."

ADMISSION:—Members, Front Seats, 9d.; Central, 6d.; Back, 4d. Non-Members, Front Seats, 1s. 6d.; Central, 1s.; Back, 6d.

Season Ticket Holders Free on production of their Tickets, which are not transferable.

Doors to be opened at a Quarter to Eight. Lecture to commence at a Quarter-past.

A Plan of the Front Seats may be seen at Mr. Higham's Library, 91, Preston Street, where reserved and numbered chairs may be secured on payment of 6d. extra for each chair.

Our photographic expert, Chris Wootton, has been thumbing through the pages of the *Faversham Institute Journal* in the society's vast archive and found these reports.

In 1868, a clergyman was issuing forth about "Old Women of Both Sexes". Three years later, Miss Emily Faithfull was speaking about the position and claims of women. We shall leave you, dear reader, to come to your own conclusions about the content of their oratory.

▶▶▶ From page 2

Central government's National Planning Policy Framework, the infamous NPPF enforced by the Planning Inspectorate, which constrains (and many would say undermines) local democracy, is relevant here.

Paragraph 20b of the framework requires councils to set strategic policies on "infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management". Development has been forced on Faversham despite major issues affecting "transport ... waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management".

However, I am told that water supply issues are not a planning reason that can be used to block development. The need to build Broad Oak Reservoir was raised in the House of Commons in July, 1975, to ensure a secure supply of potable water. Construction has still not commenced.

During the conservation area appraisal for Faversham, we were reminded again of the quantity of good-quality social housing built between the wars and immediately afterwards. That housing stock has now been sold and there is a real need for more starter and affordable homes.

The town benefits directly from the efforts made by the Faversham Society over the past 60 years. Planning is back at the forefront of our activity; please make your views known and encourage people to join us. We need your help to conserve the best of Faversham and create for the future.

Opening time Plans for Open Faversham are steaming ahead for what looks set to be a great nine days in August with something

for everyone, children and adults alike. More in the next edition of *Faversham Society Newsletter*.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Pirates and parachute silk

MARY MALLET

Visitors to the Fleur Museum during the transport weekend were full of praise. People are SO impressed and delighted. They cannot believe the range, depth and eccentricity of Faversham history that they're seeing.

Trigger points that seemed to really worked were:

- ◆ The display about John Ward, the English-Ottoman pirate, born and raised in Faversham, who later became a Barbary corsair for the Ottoman Empire operating out of Tunis during the early 17th century. Ward was also known as Yusuf Reis or Birdy. He is said to have been the inspiration for the Jack Sparrow character in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Eat your heart out, Johnny Depp!
- ◆ The King's music soundtrack, which is playing in the museum's Elizabethan room. It was composed by John Wilson, born in Faversham in 1595, principal composer for The King's Men and professor of music at Oxford University.
- ◆ The 1688 Bible – There is a prayer to be said for the King on 5 November following the Gunpowder Plot.
- ◆ The parachute silk used for a wartime gown in our wedding exhibition. Even the blokes were fascinated by this, amazed by the strength and weave, and then became interested in all the gowns and the photographs.

To page 10 ►►►



Wheels award for Millie

GILL PINDER

Fleur museum volunteers were delighted to award Millie her Wheels of Time bronze badge for collecting 10 badges from across Kent museums.

Wheels of Time aims to encourage children to become involved in exploring Kent history and, of course, collecting the free badges! There are also silver, gold and platinum awards.

Millie and her parents, who live in Sandwich, chose to receive the award at Faversham because she had such a great time being shown around the museum by Anthony the steward. Curator Heather Wootton is pictured presenting Millie with the award.

For further details of Wheels of Time, please use the link below to or pick up a leaflet at the museum's reception desk, which is open Fridays and Saturdays 11-3.

wheelsovertime.uk

MATTHEW HATCHWELL

Natural ecosystems have a remarkable capacity for recovery if only they are given the opportunity. It's hard to imagine today that the Swale and Faversham Creek in the 19th and early 20th centuries were part of an industrial landscape more evocative of dark satanic mills and Dickensian working-class misery than the internationally significant coastal wetland that we see now.

Between the mid-19th and 20th centuries, Faversham and Oare Creeks and the Swale were vital arteries for waterborne traffic to a cement works, gas works, explosives factories, shipbuilding yards, several brickfields and marshalling yards for transferring freight from barges to railway wagons.

Brickmaking in particular was back-breaking work, especially for the women and children with the grim task of sifting through endless tons of "rough stuff" – the detritus of Victorian London brought back to north Kent by returning brick barges – to separate out the ash that was a key ingredient of Kent stock bricks. The cindery remains of those sorting yards are still visible today along Faversham Creek north of Iron Wharf and at the former brickworks site at Conyer.

Other raw materials – brickearth strip-mined from surrounding fields, quarried chalk, and mud from the Swale – were also sourced locally and created scars that have slowly been absorbed back into the modern landscape.

The re-greening of the Swale that has occurred over the past 50 years is the result of social and economic changes in the UK generally, a growing awareness of the importance and value of the natural world, rising environmental standards and other factors.



The pace of change is no longer sufficient, however, to satisfy a public fed up with government policies that are heavily weighted in favour of developers rather than communities, the discharge of raw or partially treated sewage into chalk streams and bathing waters, marine protected areas that are protected in name only, and the hypocrisy of UK and European fishing policies that allow the continued exploitation of species whose

A landscape photograph showing a rural area with trees and a stream bed. The foreground is filled with tall, brown, dried-up reeds or grasses. In the middle ground, there is a grassy field with a small stream bed visible. In the background, there are more trees and a green field. The sky is overcast.

A vision for Faversham's natural heritage

The stream that once flowed from Painters Forstal through Ospringe and into the Westbrook dried up in the 1950s as the result of water abstraction

populations are under serious threat of extinction.

A more proactive approach is now needed in order for the greening and rewilding of our landscape to continue.

One of the prerequisites for the rewilding of Faversham Creek and the Swale is that the quality of water discharged from Faversham sewage works must be improved by replacing outdated Victorian-era technology and infrastructure

and investing in nature-based solutions such as a reed bed north of the sewage works that filters effluent naturally before it enters the creek.

Combined sewage outflows should no longer be spilling raw sewage into our precious chalk streams, even under storm conditions. Ultimately, wastewater processing should improve to the point

To page 8 ▶▶▶

▶▶▶ From page 8

where it can be recycled into the water supply or used to replenish the chalk aquifer. Water abstraction could be reduced as a result, water tables would rise, and flow would be restored to local chalk streams such as the Westbrook and Cooksditch.

As water quality in the Swale improves, other interventions become possible. The Zoological Society of London along with the Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership and others is already looking at the feasibility of restoring native oyster beds in the Swale, along with sea grass meadows that absorb carbon dioxide from the environment 30 times faster than tropical rainforests.

Founded in the 12th century or earlier, the Faversham Oyster Fishery Company is one of the oldest companies in the world. The potential narrative around the restoration of native oyster beds in the nearby Swale would be extremely compelling, as would the return of seahorses to the local environment as sea grass meadows expand. More work is needed too to open up and maintain access to freshwater habitat for critically endangered European eels.

With sea levels around the world rising by a metre or more by the end of this century as a result of climate change, choices will need to be made in coming years about “holding the line” by raising sea walls to defend communities in low-lying areas of Faversham and restoring tidal marshes on land that was reclaimed from the sea many centuries ago (“managed realignment”).

To maintain the historic relationship between the town and that coastal





Left: Stonebridge Pond is the former millpond of the Kings Mill Gunpowder Works that shut in the early 20th century. Below, left: the Westbrook is one of about 250 chalk streams in the world and a high priority for protection



environment, any further housing development around the town must take place to the south. There should be no more building in areas at high risk of flooding.

Faversham lies in a narrow coastal belt between two protected areas: the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Swale Site of Special Scientific Interest. Links to and between both those environments, which together shaped the town we know today, must be maintained in the form of natural corridors for wildlife, pedestrians and cyclists along the historic course of the Westbrook south from Ospringe to Painters Forstal, up the wooded Syndale Valley along the course of the lost Roman road that crosses Watling Street near Stone Chapel, and southeastwards along the ancient pilgrimage route to Canterbury via the Blean woodland.

This vision underpins the draft Neighbourhood Plan which will be the subject of a local referendum later this year. Supporting the plan will be a first step towards realising our vision. Plans are also under way – led by the Kent Nature Partnership – to develop a nature recovery network for the county as a whole to ensure that progress in individual communities such as Faversham contributes to fulfilment of broader landscape-scale goals.



▶▶▶ From page 5

- ◆ Everything in the telephone section in the Big Shed. (*Editor's note*: Two of my grandsons had to be dragged away from this exhibit – they were fascinated by the dials.)
 - ◆ The siren, gas rattle and field telephones in the wartime section
 - ◆ The shopfront, which has travelled from Market Place to Chicago and back, and now rests in the museum garden
- These two days were different because of the footfall from the transport weekend, but so many local people wandered in, too, and were wowed by it. People were sharing personal knowledge and experience with us – and that was mind-blowing.

Anyone who has been involved in this museum's evolution and content should be so proud and exhilarated.

Why we need more stewards

JOHN CLARKSTONE

Here are just a few of the recent comments from visitors to our little gem of a museum.

- ◆ "Very interesting. I went to school in Faversham and learnt a lot more about the town today" – A visitor from Norway
- ◆ "Thanks so much, really enjoyed our visit, fantastic volunteers" – Dublin
- ◆ "Beautiful, pleasure to spend time here" – California
- ◆ "Fab museum, Faversham Superstar *****" – Spain
- ◆ "Our favourite part was ringing the bell and the typewriter!" – Florida
- ◆ "Very interesting" – Australia
- ◆ "Wonderful surprise to find this and super-secret" – London
- ◆ "Loved the museum, so much

information about the area" – Essex

- ◆ "What a great museum. We'll be back" – Sissinghurst

So far this year, we have had 1,700 visitors despite usually opening only two days a week. In fact, we had our busiest day ever over the recent transport weekend with more than 180 visitors which, considering the Fleur is able to open for only four hours, equates to someone coming in or out every 40 seconds!

This means we are in desperate need of more volunteers to help us to keep the museum open for visitors, especially on Saturdays and during the summer holidays. If you are proud of your town, like meeting people and can give up two to three hours on a regular basis, then please get in touch.

We are a very friendly team and you can either pop into the reception on a Friday or Saturday, or email the address below to and we will get back to you.

volunteer@favershamsociety.org

More free history papers

LEIGH ALLISON

We've loaded six new Faversham Papers onto the website – all of which you can download free.

These cover a wide variety of subjects, all researched and written by Faversham people. So, if there is a topic below that piques your interest, head on over to our online store favershamsociety.org/store

Here they are:

- ◆ FP35 *The History of Faversham Cricket*
- ◆ FP48 *The Faversham Porter Club 1793-1885*
- ◆ FP67 *Growing up in Faversham 1918-38*
- ◆ FP74 *An Anthology of Faversham Verse 1430-1998*
- ◆ FP86 *The Parliamentary Representation of*

Faversham (from 1265)

◆ FP101 *Football in Faversham 1884-1990*

This initiative has been incredibly popular since we began loading them earlier this year. More than 200 have been downloaded, with a record 68 in one day! It's great to see so many people have an interest in the history of the town.

Arthur's archive expands

CHRIS WOOTTON

We have just uploaded several more sections to the Arthur Percival online archive.

These include Arthur's memories pages for the *Faversham News*, which he wrote until his death in 2014. The 2008 pages are now online. Only another six years to go!

In the image galleries, we have new sections on barges and ships, motor vehicles, politics and pubs.

I have also added a new heading on the website's title page: Curios. This section contains some of the interesting things that have come to light and which I have digitised. More will follow as we work through the archive. Under Curios, you will find information on:

- ◆ Ted Harrison's remembrances of working at Seager's iron foundry
- ◆ Group photographs of the 1949 William Gibb School production of *Arden of Faversham*
- ◆ And The shop display of A & W H Evernden at 116 West Street

Use the link below to access the archive.

www.arthurpercivalarchive.co.uk

Faversham everywhere

DOROTHY PERCIVAL

I have been looking through some old papers (yes, still have some, incredibly) and I found this piece dating from 2014 but

have no recollection whether it was ever used in the newsletter (it wasn't – *Editor*).

Picture, if you will, a couple called Pam and John, on a visit to Australia. They have driven for two hours through bush territory near Perth and reached a little town called York.

Strolling down the main street they notice a building called Faversham House. Hmm, interesting they think. After hesitating a bit, they knock and when the lady of the house appears they inquire politely if she knows how the house got its name.

"Well, what an extraordinary thing," she says. "That's the second time I've been asked that question this week. I had a letter from a man in England asking me as well."

Quick-witted John asks: "It wouldn't be from Arthur Percival by any chance?" She was utterly amazed at that, asked them in for tea and showed them the letter. Then they told her that although they didn't live in Faversham, John's sister, Julie Landon, who has always treasured this story, worked with Arthur at the Civic Trust, and came to live in Faversham at Arthur's suggestion.

Julie and Peter became Arthur and Dorothy's oldest friends and lived opposite for many years. Pam and John, of course, knew nothing about the letter, but did know of Arthur's interests from their many visits to see Julie and Peter over the years.

In particular they recalled Arthur's curiosity about anywhere in the world where the name Faversham cropped up. It was still a very shrewd guess about the origin of the letter, though. Subsequently Arthur got a letter saying that Faversham House was so named because the owner's ancestors went to Australia from Ospringe in the 1880s.

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 here 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, will open on Fridays and Saturdays from 11am to 3pm. Additionally, it will open on Sunday, 28 May, for a Wheels of Time presentation.

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 open on Saturdays and Sundays from 2pm to 5pm.

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

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

