

Faversham Society Newsletter

Winter 2023-24

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Chairman's column

HAROLD GOODWIN

This edition, the Winter Edition of the Faversham Society Newsletter, covers two issues. The next edition will be out at the end of January

Food poverty is as much an issue in Faversham as it is nationally, and our homelessness challenges are growing. We now have people sleeping on the streets again. Our charitable objectives determine what, the society, we can and can't do to support local charities. We have donated £1,000 to the Christmas Lights this year – a precious element in our cultural heritage, one which benefits us all, young and old, fit and frail – and it reminds us all, believers

The postbox 'toppers' made by Faversham Gunpowder WI are adding to the celebration of Christmas again. The group will have a bigger and better display in St Mary of Charity Church during Open Faversham in the summer

and non-believers, that it is Christmas. It is a time when we celebrate with our families and may be moved to think of others much less fortunate than ourselves.

This is the last time I shall be writing the chairman's introduction to the newsletter at Christmas. As many of you know, I announced at the last annual meeting that I would be stepping down at the next AGM.

It is time to pass the baton. The AGM this year is in the Assembly Rooms on 14 June. I shall, however, remain on the board and active on environment and planning.

You will see the job specification for my successor on pages 4-5. If you are interested in stepping up to take the role or know someone who might, then please contact Katie Begg.

The new executive board is working well, making the chairing of the society far less onerous. We now have a small but dedicated and active team working on Environment and Planning – you can follow our work on the policy blog on our website. Early next year, we are planning a series of talks on some of the major challenges facing our town and our communities.

We hope the Neighbourhood Plan, on which so many of us have laboured over the past four years, will finally come to the necessary referendum in 2024. It is our best means of preventing unwanted speculative developments within our parish boundary on Abbeyfields or Ham Road.

We need more housing to enable local people to continue to live in the town. Too many extended families are forced to move apart, the young to find housing at a price they can afford, and families as they grow and need larger accommodation.

Open Faversham was widely regarded as a success this year, and next year it will be bigger and better. It is taking place from 17-25 August. Ideas are already coming in. If you have ideas or know of others who would like to be part of it next year, please let them know. We want Open Faversham to be as extensive and inclusive as possible.

As we approach the turn of the year and the shortest day, we can look forward to spring and lengthening days.

Season's greetings, and may we all hope for a better 2024 here in Faversham and around the world.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Society's new strategy

KATIE BEGG

The Faversham Society has launched its new organisational strategy. It is an ambitious and aspirational overview of what the society would like to achieve in the coming years. Central to its purpose is to ensure our volunteers feel cherished and supported as they help us to deliver on our aims.

The strategy outlines our intentions for securing the future of the society. It was developed in consultation with many of our members and volunteers, and with reference to both internal and external factors that will impact the society. We hope it clearly sets out how the society wants to grow and adapt so that it can continue to serve the town for years to come.

The full strategy document is available on [Favershamsociety.org/strategy](https://favershamsociety.org/strategy). Some of the key aims included are:

- ◆ Growing the society by increasing membership, making our volunteer and fundraising propositions clear, engaging in our community and building our partnerships in the town and beyond.
- ◆ Achieving excellence in our services by professionalising our campaigning, preserving our natural environment, future-proofing our museum and creating a new plan for our archives.
- ◆ Improving our governance and management by cherishing our volunteers, improving our planning

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15th-century spur to see the light of day



The Ospringe spur conserved and (below) as it was

NIGEL MANNOUCH

This 15th-century spur was discovered in an excavation by the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group in the front garden of Queen Court Farmhouse, Ospringe, in the summer of 2021.

Now, painstaking and costly work has been undertaken by conservationists at the Museum of London Archaeology and the result can be seen above. It is hoped that it will be on display next year. It will have to be in a special container to avoid further corrosion.

The spur was made for a rider's left foot — the partial buckle being on the outside, with the sides curving downwards beneath the ankle bone — and has a long neck, angling slightly downwards, common in Western Europe, which developed because of a change in riding style. By the 15th century it was common for knights and

men at arms to ride with a high saddle, with the legs straight. The longer neck therefore accommodated the increased distance between the rider's heel and the horse's flank.

We sent a photograph of our find to the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds and Eleanor Wilkinson-Keys, an assistant curator, gave us a full analysis. It was dated as 1450-1500. The spur was also x-rayed by the Museum of London Archaeology.

Towards the rowel — the spiked revolving disc at the end of a spur — the neck divides to form the rowel box. The rowel is small, with eight petal-shaped points. Where the neck joins the heel there is a small crest, at the back of the heel. Some spurs display prominent and sometimes curled crests. This one, however, appears fairly subtle, a common feature for this period.

Have you got what it takes to chair the Faversham Society?

KATIE BEGG

At the Faversham Society's AGM in June 2023, Harold Goodwin announced that he will retire from his role from the chair of the Faversham Society at our next AGM – due to take place in June 2024.

The society is therefore seeking expressions of interest from those who are considering seeking nomination for chair of the society from June. We have therefore provided a role specification to help people as they consider the role.

If you would like to learn more about the role of chairing the society, or express interest in seeking nomination for this position, in the first instance please contact me, Katie Begg. I am a trustee who provides the secretariat to the society's executive committee and can be contacted at kfullers2@hotmail.com. The full recruitment process will be detailed in the coming months.

Role specification

The Articles of Association of the Faversham Society (Article 17) state that the "chair and vice-chair of the society shall be elected annually, from the elected directors and by a majority vote of the members, at the annual general meeting."

The purpose of the chair is to provide leadership in particular of the board of trustees and of the executive committee to which the board has delegated the responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Faversham Society.

Our president, Richard Oldfield, plays an important role in our external communications and at the AGMs and major public meetings.



Books, visitors and history: just a few of the society's facets led from the chair

Responsibilities

- ◆ Provide leadership and oversight of all aspects of the work of the Faversham Society and engage and enthuse its many volunteers.
- ◆ Drive the society's new strategy.
- ◆ Act as an effective spokesperson and ambassador for the society working with our president.
- ◆ Develop and maintain effective working relationships with external partners and stakeholders as necessary.
- ◆ Chair the Faversham Society board of



- trustees effectively, including ensuring financial probity of all transactions, good governance, compliance with statutory requirements, and adherence of activity with the aims and objectives of the organisation.
- ◆ Present an overview of the society's work at the society annual general meeting
 - ◆ Chair the Faversham Society's executive committee, which manages the society's activities and reports to the board of trustees.
 - ◆ Support the executive committee management group chairs to manage

activities and engaged volunteers to effectively deliver the society's work, and identify successors for committee chairs should the need arise.

- ◆ Recruit new trustees and support recruitment of new volunteers when necessary to provide stability within the society.
- ◆ Work with the society's trustees to ensure implementation of decisions made by the board and executive committee.
- ◆ The board of the Faversham Society meets on a quarterly basis, via Zoom, and meetings take place in January, April, July and October.
- ◆ The executive committee of the society meets on a more ad hoc basis either online or in person, approximately once a month.

Personal skills

- ◆ Strong commitment to the goals of the Faversham Society
- ◆ Experience managing, motivating and inspiring volunteers within a community or charitable organisation.
- ◆ Experience of stakeholder relationship and partnership building
- ◆ Experience or interest in community-led campaigning
- ◆ Deep personal or professional interest in the future of Faversham, and conservation and heritage issues
- ◆ Strong inter-personal skills
- ◆ Good presentation skills and confidence in chairing meetings
- ◆ Confidence in financial and operational organisational management

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and budgeting, creating financial sustainability and prioritising our goals.

We do hope you'll take the time to read the full strategy. If you would like to give feedback or find out more about any aspect of it, please do get in touch!

Katie Begg is a society trustee

Faversham's famous

HAROLD GOODWIN

Robert Newman has written to me pointing out that Iain Banks (1954-2013), one of the bestselling authors of the modern era, lived in Faversham.

He came to 117 St John's Road in September, 1983, and then moved to Edinburgh in January, 1988. However, it is uncertain when he sold the house in Faversham and he may have visited occasionally for years afterwards.

He was a regular at the Royal Willaim pub on the corner of St Mary's Road, and William Street, which shut in 1994 and is now a private house.

Banks wrote *Espeidair Street*, published in 1987, while he lived in Faversham. The book tells the story of the rise to fame of Dan Weir ("Weird"), a bass guitar player in a rock'n'roll band *Frozen Gold*, and of his struggles to be happy once he becomes rich and famous.

Is it time for more plaques to record Faversham's past? Are there other famous names and events that need recording? If you have ideas please contact me.

chair@favershamsociety.org

Expert opinion on Parr book

PAUL MOORBATH

Our copy of the book of prayers translated by Queen Katherine Parr – Henry VIII's

sixth and final wife – in 1545 has been on display in the Fleur museum.

Now, however, it will disappear from view for a few weeks while it is examined by Dr David Shaw, an expert from the British Library, who has kindly offered to decide upon which edition we have.

In Tudor times, books were printed in small numbers and if they sold well, they were reprinted but with each edition the text may have been changed, so there are variations.

The medieval book adviser Justin Croft, who lives in Faversham, has offered to take it away for him to examine.

Free books to download

LEIGH ALLISON

If you fancy some light reading over Christmas, we've digitised some more Faversham Papers for you to download for FREE.

Faversham 1900 to 1910 Syd Twist Remembers (Faversham Paper 13). Vivid recollections of a local resident covering all areas of the town.

Miscellany No 1 (Faversham Paper 29). There are four shorter papers here, the first three relating to the lives of locals:

- ◆ William Bennett 1726 -96, town mayor in 1782 and 1792, who wrote his life story shortly before he died.
- ◆ The Rev C. Terence Spurling was the curate at the parish church and his diary from 1935 to 1945.
- ◆ Willam E. Sands, from his birth in Selling in 1895 until his retirement from the motor trade in 1972.
- ◆ A short account of life working on the railways as a goods clerk, from 1937, by Frank Newman.
Guns, Gunpowder and Saltpetre (Faversham Paper 58). Explaining the

invention of gunpowder in China, through medieval European guns and gunpowder technology right up to the supply of saltpetre during the Napoleonic wars, this is an exhaustive reference book.

Beowulf in Kent (Faversham Paper 64). In two parts, the first is by Paul Wilkinson, proposing that the Isle of Harty was a potential location for the heroic poem, and the second by Griselda Cann Mussett who provides details of the Sheppey legend in support of his idea.

The Faversham Legends of Crispin and Crispianus (Faversham Paper 73). These two Roman saints and shoemakers were said to have lived in Faversham in the late third century and are commemorated by a plaque at the junction of East Street and Preston Street.

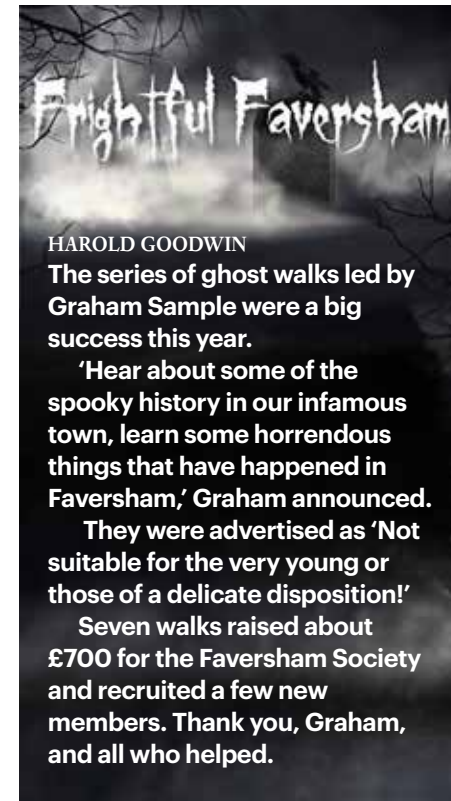
The Way We Were – Life in Faversham 100 years ago (Faversham Paper 107). Snippets of information relating to everyday life, taken from the local newspapers.

Shopping at the VIC

CHRISTINE SMITH

Looking to shop locally this Christmas? You will have seen from the last newsletter that we have the Faversham Society's calendar and Christmas cards for sale but did you know that we have a selection of goods produced by local people?

There is a range of unmounted, mounted or framed prints in a variety of styles and media, priced from £2 to £40. Jeanie Sandiford has produced a new mosaic mug to add to her original design. We have for sale the town market's own shopping bag as well as its unique Christmas cards and there are some beautiful and unusual handmade gifts from the men's shed project at the Abbey Physic Garden.



HAROLD GOODWIN

The series of ghost walks led by Graham Sample were a big success this year.

'Hear about some of the spooky history in our infamous town, learn some horrendous things that have happened in Faversham,' Graham announced.

They were advertised as 'Not suitable for the very young or those of a delicate disposition!'

Seven walks raised about £700 for the Faversham Society and recruited a few new members. Thank you, Graham, and all who helped.

Merchandise also embraces some of the town's charters include shopping bags, notebooks, tea towels and fridge magnets.

Our bestselling *Faversham: A Brief History* book, at £4.99, makes an excellent gift as does the children's book, *Murder, Mystery and Majesty*. Both are published by the society.

Why not come along and take a look – and while shopping you could pick up the lovely selection of free walks leaflets to support those new year's resolutions!

Sheps goes for zero

OUR BREWING CORRESPONDENT

Shepherd Neame has committed to ambitious targets aiming for net zero

carbon for direct emissions by 2030 and net zero for Scope 3 emissions (not produced by the firm itself) no later than 2040, and zero waste to landfill by 2025.

It is also working towards a Green Mark sustainability certification for its brewery, visitor centre and support offices.

The brewery's chief executive, Jonathan Neame, said: "A commitment to doing the right thing for our community, our people and our environment is at the heart of our strategy."

Sheps, which has 300 pubs and hotels throughout London and the southeast, has outlined its green credentials as the company launched its People, Pubs and Planet campaign.

The Court Street company already uses 100 per cent electricity from renewable sources across its brewery and managed pub estate since October, 2020, and 100 per cent of green CO₂ in its production process.

Mr Neame said Sheps was increasing the number of hybrid or electric cars in its fleet and had installed rapid charging facilities at the brewery and six of its pubs with more to be introduced.

Bric-a-brac please

WENDY CLARKE

The Fleur bookshop in Preston Street is extending its bric-a-brac/small gift area for the Christmas season to provide a variety of good-quality second-hand items for shoppers. All donations gratefully received.

The clock is

DAVID MELVILLE

On 17 August Cleve Hill Solar Power Ltd submitted its battery safety management plan (BSMP) to Swale Borough Council, which was given eight weeks to approve or reject it.

This was a requirement laid down three years ago in May 2020 by the secretary of state when he gave outline planning approval for the huge solar plant at Cleve Hill in Graveney. At that time only scant details were provided on the batteries, which were planned to be built alongside the 880,000 solar panels.

Instead, a device known as the "Rochdale Envelope" was invoked, which permits developers of technically complex projects to delay submission of details to allow for the latest technical advances to be introduced later. The flaw in this approach is that the entire burden of approval of what is potentially the largest battery energy storage system (Bess) in the world falls on the local planning authority – Swale.

For the past four years the Faversham Society has drawn attention to the regular frequency of fires and explosions at Bess sites throughout the world, leading to injury and loss of life. We have recently argued that the Swale planning department is ill-equipped to make a judgment on such a complex matter, which could possibly impact catastrophically on the health and wellbeing of the population.

Since the BSMP was published there have been almost 100 objections posted on the Swale planning portal by residents, nearby local authorities and Graveney Rural Environment Action Team. The

ticking for Cleve Hill safety

Faversham Society objections can be found here:

favershamsociety.org/major-concerns-about-battery-safety

favershamsociety.org/7178-2/

Our conclusion is that the BSMP is inadequate, misrepresents and fails to take account of experience of battery fires elsewhere, has a dangerously cursory approach to toxic gas emissions and water requirements, lacks sufficient detail to make a judgment and fails to address important matters raised by Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Faversham Society.

'This highlights the failure of government departments to take responsibility in for the risks associated with grid scale battery storage proposed for Cleve Hill'

We have, along with all other objectors demanded that Swale reject the battery plan.

Despite our recommendation in August this year that Swale councillors should take independent technical advice to guide their decision-making, it was not until the end of the eight-week approval period that they agreed to do so. This meant that Swale had to seek an agreement to extend the decision period and our understanding is that an independent expert has recently been appointed.

We have also strongly urged that in view of its far-reaching consequences, the final

decision is taken by the full Swale planning committee and not simply by planning officers.

Swale is additionally required to consult Kent Fire and Rescue Service as well as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The fire service has provided advice limited to their fire remit, but says nothing about the lack of any reference to the well-established explosion hazard, which the particular battery type chosen is especially vulnerable to.

However, the HSE has – unhelpfully – responded with the following statement:

"Although the development consent order indicates that HSE should be consulted in relation to a battery safety management plan, HSE does not provide comment on such plans."

This highlights the failure of government departments and organisations to take responsibility for regulating in relation to the risks associated with grid scale battery storage such as that proposed for Cleve Hill and which have been demonstrated to be subject to spontaneous fires and explosions. We have recently taken this up with Helen Whately, the MP for Faversham, requesting that she raises it at the highest levels of government.

The clock is ticking for Swale to make a decision but we have not been informed of the length of the extension which has been agreed. If Swale fails to make a decision within an agreed timescale, the matter reverts to the relevant government minister to decide.

Professor Sir David Melville is vice-chairman of the Faversham Society

**This building
has helped the
community for
160 years.
Now it needs
your help**

CAROLYN FLANAGAN

Since 1863, Faversham Almshouses have faithfully served people needing affordable accommodation.

Today, there are 69 residences in South Road, most of them in the splendid original building, the largest, and arguably the finest, scheme of its kind in Kent. The building is dominated by large, steeply pitched tiled roofs, broken up by a series of brick gabled ends and hipped cross roofs. The composition is completed by a collection of 18 substantial and boldly detailed chimneys, all rising nearly 10ft above the main ridge line.

Maintaining this Grade II-listed building – probably the most impressive in Faversham – is a continuing challenge for the Faversham Municipal Charities. Over recent years there have been ad-hoc patch repairs to the roof. However, this is no longer sufficient as the quinquennial inspection of the building by the charity's architects has identified significant problems with the roof.

All hip tiles, which should be bedded in, are loose, and are easily picked up and



The scaffolding goes up on the almshouses for the essential roof work

taken off. The bitumen-backed membrane has failed and lacks support at every junction and work to the abutments with the chimney stacks is also required to prevent water ingress to the attic spaces.

So, to avoid irreparable damage to the building, the whole roof needs to be repaired urgently. The work will be undertaken in two phases, with the first phase due to start in mid-August. It is expected that this phase will take at least six months.

The total cost of the repairs is just over £860,000. This is a significant cost to the charity, which is urgently seeking to raise funds to do the repairs. Although the

project has already received donations of £57,000 towards the repairs, there is still a long way to go to reach the target.

David Simmons, chairman of charities trustees, said: "Repairing the roof is a significant investment, but ultimately it will ensure that the almshouses can continue to be lived in safely and comfortably by residents for many years to come. We don't have sufficient funds to do all of the repairs, so if anyone would like to support our fundraising appeal, they can donate through JustGiving, or they can give directly through the almshouse office."

The almshouses have been helping those in need in the town by providing accommodation for people who are most often older and inadequately housed.

The 69 residences provide affordable



accommodation and a supportive environment for nearly 75 beneficiaries. In recent years, the importance of the almshouses' service to the Faversham community has been increased by the closure in the town of two large sheltered housing sites for the elderly, Ambleside and Herbert Dane Court. Additionally, the current economic pressures have seen an increase in demand for accommodation.

In addition to the accommodation, there are a community room and a chapel, which are regularly used by other community groups, too.

Carolyn Flanagan is the clerk to the trustees of the Faversham Municipal Charities
www.justgiving.com/campaign/faversham-almshouses

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.

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FAVERSHAM SOCIETY OPENING



The **Visitor Information Centre** and book and gift shop at 12 Market Place, Faversham, is open 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday and 10am-1pm Sunday (opening hours may vary).

info@favershamsociety.org

The **Fleur de Lis museum** at 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, is open at 11am-3pm on 8, 9, 10 15, 16, 29 and 30 December. It will then close until February half-term.

The **Fleur de Lis second-hand bookshop** in Preston Street, Faversham, is open 10am-3.30pm, Monday to Saturday.

The **Chart Gunpowder Mills** in Nobel Court, off South Road, Faversham, are now closed for winter and will re-open in April.

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