

FAVERSHAM EYE

favershameye.co.uk

THE NEWSPAPER FOR AND ABOUT FAVERSHAM

NOVEMBER 2024 EDITION

WELCOME TO ISSUE 18 OF FAVERSHAM EYE.

In a slightly shorter late Autumn issue, our main subject concerns the referendum for the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan. The binary nature of a referendum means you vote to accept the proposals of the plan as presented or you don't. The problem with rejection is you have little or no control over ensuing developments. We argue that, in our opinion, the Plan responds positively to the needs of Faversham and sets out policies to protect and enhance what makes the place so

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special. By voting not to accept, you are not voting for any defined alternative. It seems a potentially dangerous way to make important long-term decisions.

Invisible to most of the population, the Faversham Food Bank successfully works to provide at least some vital assistance to those most in need. We offer a window onto its operation and how people can offer support.

Elsewhere in the paper we report on the appalling E. coli bacteria pollution in our waterway, highlighting again the utter failure of our privatised water industry. Also, an article by a local casualty of the consequences of having two different profit-maximising companies operating to provide our drinking water and deal with our wastewater.

A Swale Councillor who has worked hard to mitigate the disastrous introduction of Suez as our waste collector, recounts the sorry story.

The sad death of Griselda Mussett marks the loss of one of Faversham's tireless campaigners. Also, the passing of Professor Chris Wright who did much to help establish the Creek Trust.

Finally reports on the recent Faversham Fringe, the Summer Swale traditional sailing match and a critical revisit to the town pubs to test if the quality of our local beer has changed much over the past five years.

In the scary new world of Donald Trump the second, we can only pray that the next four years pass without two many disasters and we look forward to some bright things in 2025.

We hope you enjoy the paper and vote positively in the referendum on 21st November.

A great picture by Seamus Masters of some of the colony of seals that inhabit the Horse Sands that lie in the River Swale at the mouth of Faversham Creek. A good reason to take a local trip on a boat.



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Central government requires local authorities to produce long term development plans for their area

The emerging Swale Local Plan will probably not be presented for adoption until late in 2025

Worryingly, there seems to be a distinct possibility that the countryside around Faversham will bear the brunt of new development

Faversham Neighbourhood Plan concerns itself only with the administrative area covered by Faversham Town Council and NOT the countryside surrounding the town



LOCAL PLANS - VOTE YES TO FAVERSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

It is entirely understandable that many people in the Town are wholly confused by the complexity of local planning processes.

They read in the press and elsewhere of proposals by Swale to allow developers to build thousands more new houses in and around Faversham and see the reality of the many recently built estates which already have put a serious strain on the Town's infrastructure without doing much to provide appropriate and affordable accommodation for our actual housing needs.

Central government requires local authorities to produce long term development plans for their area and these plans need to demonstrate the ability to provide sufficient sites for the somewhat arbitrary number of new dwellings that are deemed necessary by our Westminster masters.

The vast number of pages of documents generated in the process of producing a development plan are not readily accessible or make for easy reading and consequently, most of the population know little or nothing of what they are about to be lumbered with until it is too late.

This is certainly true of the emerging Swale Local Plan which will probably not be presented for adoption until late in 2025 but about which rumours already abound concerning where it is likely the next 9 or 10 thousand houses will be built in the Borough. Worryingly, there seems to be a distinct possibility that the countryside around Faversham will bear the brunt of new development. The argument being that by concentrating it all in one area, in planning jargon, it becomes sustainable.

This is a fight we need to be engaged with over the next year and

we hope that organisations opposed to the worst kind of speculative development will work together to mitigate the damage done to our special town by whatever Swale finally proposes.

There is one great advantage, however, of an adopted Local Plan in that it protects the area from opportunistic planning applications on sites not specified in the plan by those seeking a quick financial killing. However, this is only an advantage when the Local Plan itself hasn't laid waste to it.

THE FAVERSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In many respects this is a completely different type of document. Namely:

- 1. It concerns itself only with the administrative area covered by Faversham Town Council and not the countryside surrounding the town.
- 2. It takes a holistic view of issues

concerning the Town and has developed a list of 16 policies, other than site allocations, covering things such as movement, design, community facilities, the town centre and local green space.

These policies are largely uncontroversial and generally benign. 3. It proposes a very modest addition of about 200 new dwellings on brownfield sites within the town boundary. These are listed towards the end of this article.

A significant number of these sites had previously been identified in the already adopted Faversham Creek Plan. Other more controversial and damaging sites were considered and rejected.

4. It proposes eight areas within the town boundary as designated Local Green Space. (see more details of these in the following article by authors of the Neighbourhood plan). This will give them significant protection against any future development.

Most importantly, if this plan receives a positive vote by the electorate of Faversham on November 21st other large speculative proposals within Faversham can be legitimately rejected by the Planners.

This includes two particularly destructive pending applications for 180+houses at ABBEYFIELDS by Atwood Trust and another 240+ houses on HAM MARSHES by Gladman Developments.

Both of these applicants are notorious for making speculative applications on greenfield sites in and around existing settlements acting for landowners on a "no win no fee"

basis. They exploit local planning authorities with weak local plans and repeatedly appeal against refusals causing cash-strapped councils extra expense which they can ill afford.

The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan is not unrealistic in its aims and ambitions and as such sadly recognises the futility of including grandiose proposals for Faversham Creek and Basin which are unlikely to be achieved given the supine and impotent nature of our local, regional and national representatives.

THE FAVERSHAM EYE URGES ELECTORS TO VOTE YES TO THE ADOPTION OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ON THE 21ST OF NOVEMBER

We can then concentrate on the emerging and much more contentious Swale Local Plan which unlike this Neighbourhood Plan presents a real existential threat to what makes Faversham such a special place.

PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN BOUNDARIES - KEY TO CLASS DEFINITIONS AT BOTTOM.

- 1. Former coach depot, Abbey Street. Allocated for mixed use in Classes E and C3.
- 2. Ordnance Wharf. Allocated for mixed use in Classes E, C3 and F2.
- 3. Fentiman's Yard, New Creek Road. Mixed use in Classes C3 and E.
- 4. The Railway Yard, Station Road. Residential Class C3.
- 5. Former White Horse car park site, North Lane. Residential Class C3.
- 6. Sites at BMM Weston Ltd on Brent Road. Residential Class C and C3.
- 7. BMM Weston car park, Creekside. Mixed use Classes C and E.
- 8. Kiln Court and Osbourne Court, Hazebrouk Road. Allocated for residential development including dwellings and residential institutions.
- 9. Land at Beaumont Davey Close, Ashford Road. Residential Class C.

Class C: Buildings where people sleep
 C2: Residential institutions
 C3: Dwelling houses
 Class E: Commercial uses
 Class F2: Local community use



The Swale Local Plan presents a real existential threat to what makes Faversham such a special place, unlike the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan which involves only Faversham Town



Above: Former Coach Depot, Abbey Street
Right above: Ordnance Wharf at the head of the basin.
Right. Fentiman's Yard, New Creek Road.



Above: Kiln Court, Hazebrouk Road.
Left. Former White Horse car park, North Lane.
Right. BMM Weston car park, creekside Brents Road.

THE FAVERSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan goes to a referendum on Thursday, November 21st

A YES vote is essential to enable our town to continue to meet local needs whilst maintaining its character for our children and their children

If there is a NO vote, there will be a deluge of unwanted speculative development across Faversham

Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place protects Faversham against the presumption in favour of such speculative development

If there is NO plan it will leave us very vulnerable to speculative and unwanted planning applications from land agents and developers driven by their own commercial interests



The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan aims to protect and enhance the Town of Faversham in identified key areas these include:

- 1 Promoting the viability and vitality of the town centre, as a resource for local people and visitors.
 - 2 Supporting sustainable housing growth to meet the diverse needs of the local community.
 - 3 Protecting Faversham's green spaces and natural environments and ensuring environmental quality.
- The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan goes to a referendum on Thursday, November 21st, and all registered voters in the town have a vote. A YES vote is essential to enable our town to continue to meet local needs whilst maintaining its character for our children and their children. Faversham is a special place, and we need to ensure that it remains special, prospers, and meets the needs of our community, now and in the future.

THERE IS NO PLAN B

Back in 2019, we, a group of concerned citizens in the Faversham Future Forum, pressed the Town Council to start creating a Neighbourhood Plan so that, as a town, we would have more control over our development. Once passed at referendum, the Faversham Plan will form part of the local Development Plan (alongside the Swale Plan) and Swale Planners must consider the policies and the site allocations we have made for Faversham when determining planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan policies carry legal weight. One of the reasons given by Swale for rejecting the application to build 250 homes on fields at Ham Road was the site's rejection by the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

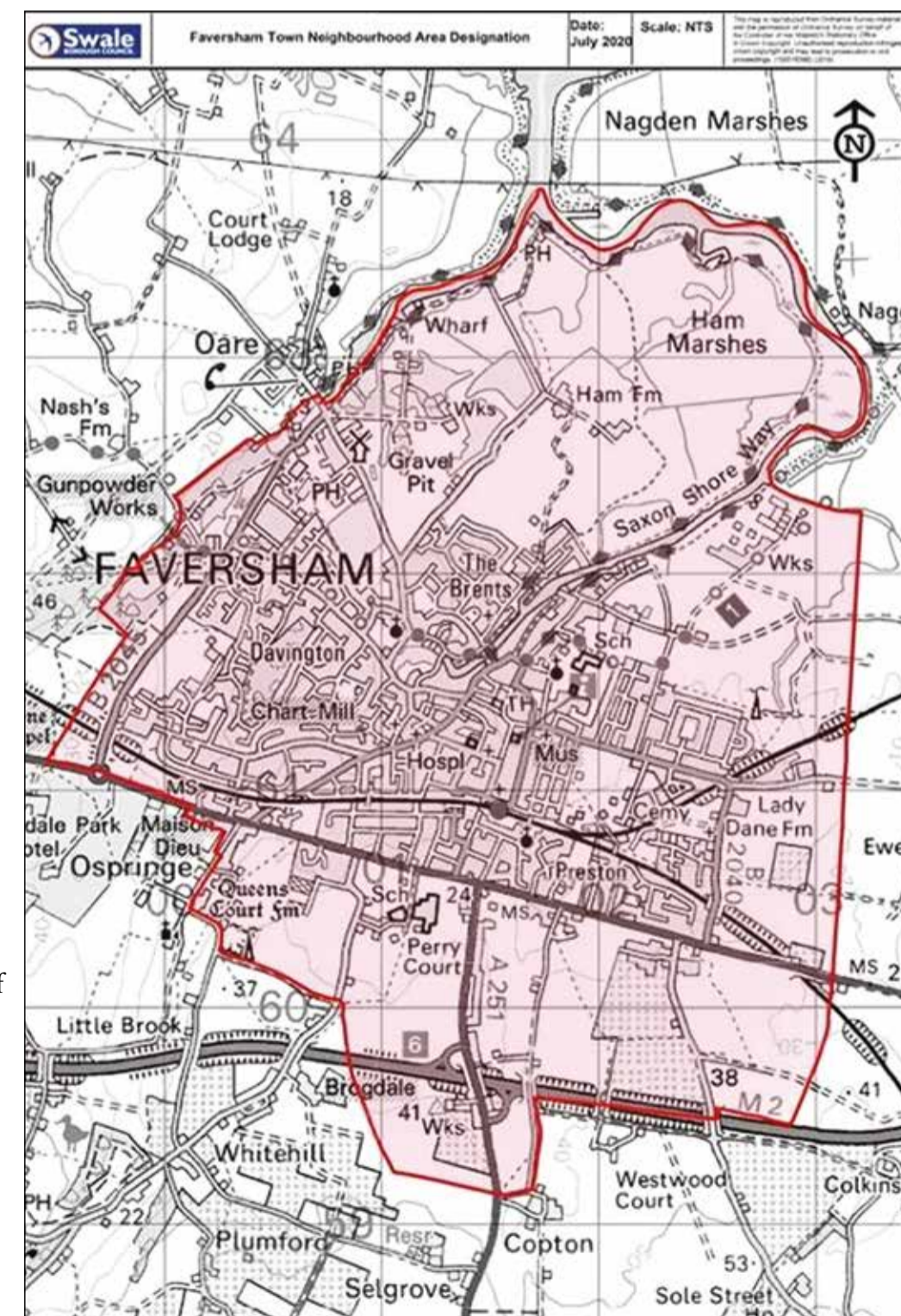
It has taken five years and hours of work by volunteers and councillors working with support from a professional planner to develop the plan we now have. This is a community plan. Community input from public exhibitions, five sets of consultations, and a national record number of formal consultation responses were considered when developing the plan. Many of the

comments, ideas and preference expressed by the community were included in plan; the result, a Faversham Plan developed by the people of Faversham, for the people of Faversham.

The referendum cannot be treated as a safe opportunity for a "protest vote"

As a community we have fought off major housing development on Abbeyfields and Ham Road; these sites are fully protected from development by the Neighbourhood Plan. If there is a no-vote, there

Below: The Neighbourhood Plan is only relevant to Faversham Town



will be a deluge of unwanted speculative development across Faversham as the Swale Plan is no longer fit for purpose and we will be without any local development plan. Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place protects Faversham against the presumption in favour of such speculative development. The Faversham Plan can no longer be amended. It is this version of the Plan or no Faversham Plan.

No plan will leave us very vulnerable to speculative and unwanted planning applications from land agents and developers driven by their own commercial interests, not the interests of Faversham and its people.

The Faversham Plan has to align with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Swale Local Plan

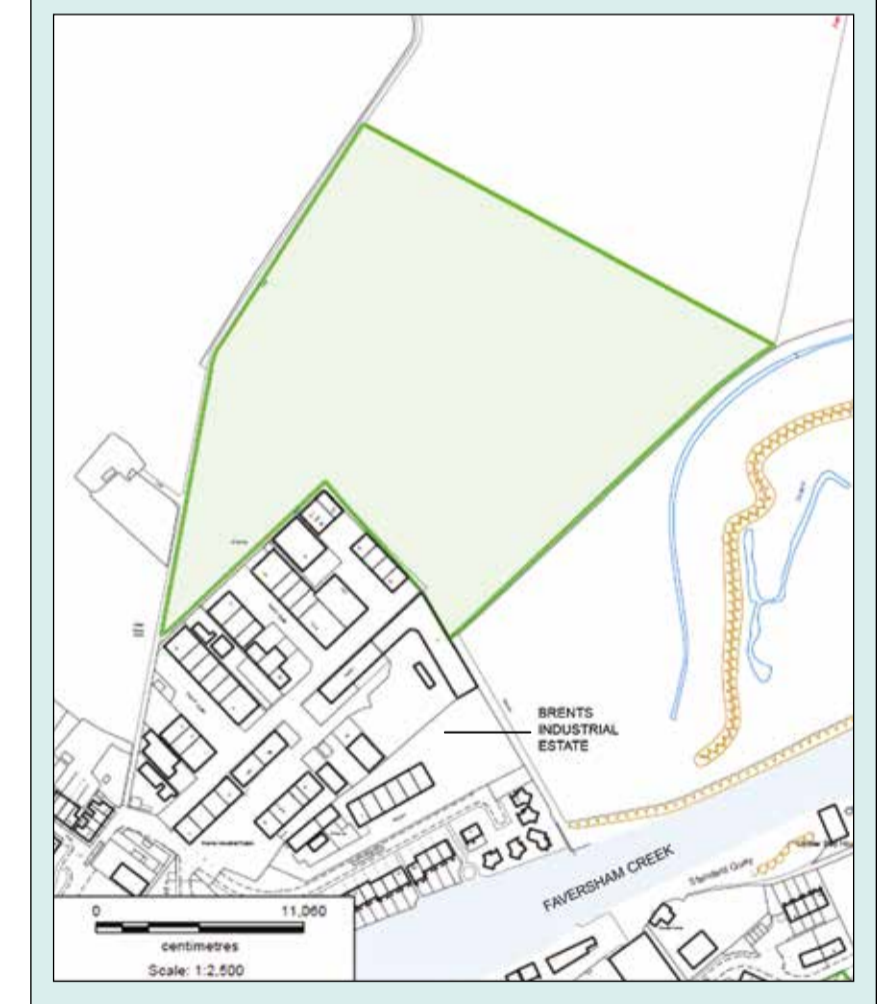
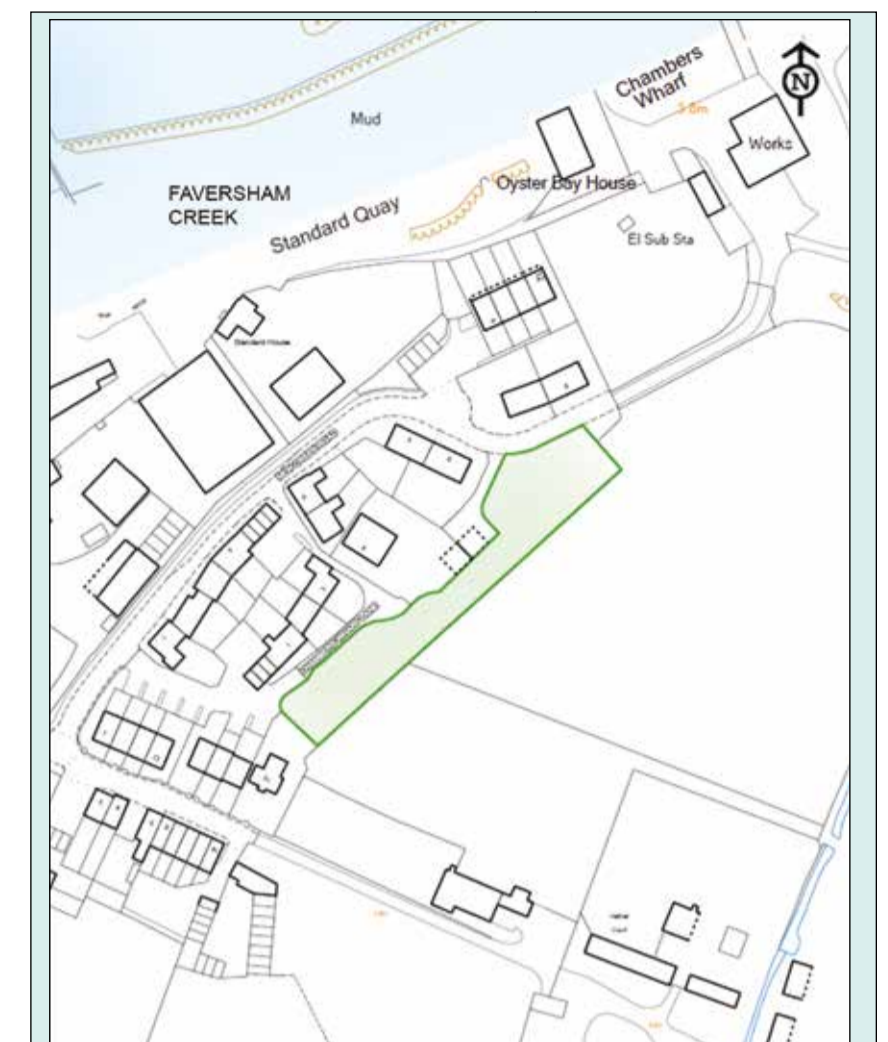
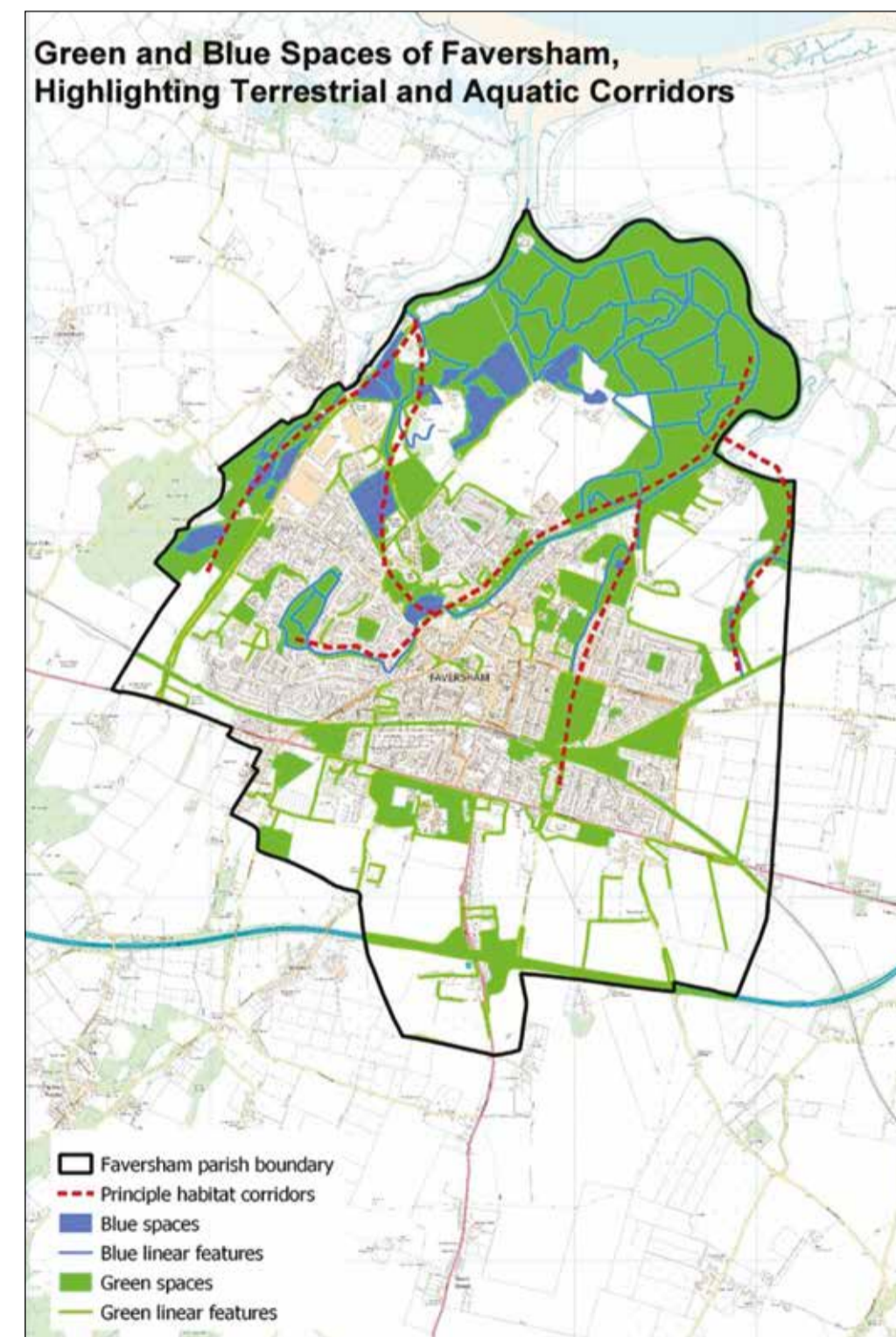
The Neighbourhood Plan cannot address all of Faversham's needs. It is impossible to secure more health service provision, improve transport, fix the roads, or solve our infrastructure problems through the planning system. All of these are of critical importance and the Faversham's Future will work to address these issues. We have pushed to include as much as legally possible in the Faversham Plan. For example, critical junctions are generally not identified in neighbourhood plans; we persuaded the planning inspector to include them. Roads and traffic management are highway issues, which are a KCC responsibility. The NPPF limits our ability to demand higher standards on air quality and renewable energy. The Faversham Plan strongly supports mobility and sustainable transport (FAV 4)* and

public rights of way, national trails, pedestrian routes and cycleways. Its not perfect but it's as good as it gets.

PROTECTING MORE GREEN SPACES

Our town is blessed with numerous green spaces punctuating our urban landscape. Eighteen of these spaces ranging from our Town allotments, playing fields and parks to green spaces along the Front and Upper Brents are already protected as Local Green Spaces by Swale Borough Council. The Neighbourhood Plan will designate eight new Local Green Spaces, protecting them from the threat of future residential development. These include the extensive playing fields at the Windermere Estate and Lower Road as well as Woodlands at Wildish Road, Crab Island alongside the Creek, the fields from Upper Brents towards Faversham Creek and the

Below: The Neighbourhood Plan is only relevant to Faversham Town



land adjacent to New Creek Road. Importantly the Neighbourhood Plan will protect the numerous cherished amenity spaces that exist within our current housing developments. These are modest areas of grass and trees that contribute to our quality of life and wellbeing. One such small 'site' was recently put up for sale, a small green space with a beautiful willow tree adjacent to Beech Close. Such spaces will be protected through the Faversham Plan.

Top: The area shown in green is land adjacent to New Creek Road. Bottom: The area shown in green is land at Upper Brents towards Faversham Creek.

These are two of the eight new Local Green Spaces proposed in the new Neighbourhood Plan.



The Neighbourhood Plan will allocate land for 219 dwellings. 100% of these new builds will be on existing brownfield sites

The Neighbourhood Plan has been able to demand that 66% of all new affordable housing should be for affordable rent

The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encourage well-designed, sustainable, and locally distinctive development

The plan calls for heritage-led regeneration with the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings

The new Faversham Plan seeks to "promote regeneration of brownfield and heritage sites" around the creek



HOUSING ONLY ON BROWNFIELD SITES

As a planning document the Neighbourhood Plan will allocate land for 219 dwellings. 100% of these new builds will be on existing brownfield sites, an unambiguous preference for those who responded to the extensive consultations. The majority of these homes will be one- and two-bedroom flats (incorporated in mixed-use developments), two to three homes for young families and accommodation suitable for older people and those with limited mobility. It is obvious of course,

that 219 dwellings over the next 15 years will be insufficient to support the housing numbers demanded by central government. The plan does, however, give us some control over where new houses will go within the existing Parish boundary. Importantly, the Neighbourhood Plan has been able to demand that 66% of all new affordable housing should be for affordable rent and express clear support and preference for affordable housing provision that remains available in perpetuity (ie not sold off through 'right to buy') to meet ongoing local need.

HERITAGE AND THE FUTURE

The Faversham Plan seeks to encourage well-designed, sustainable, and locally distinctive development. The plan lists eleven requirements for new builds to enhance the character of the town and take account of the "Faversham Design Guidance and Codes" developed by AECOM* and published as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Process in May 2021. The Faversham Plan calls for green infrastructure, including street and garden trees, and traditional hedges to mark boundaries.

The plan calls for heritage-led regeneration with the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings and encourages opportunities to realise the cultural and economic potential of heritage associated with our maritime history, agriculture, brick-making, gunpowder, brewing, wars and the twentieth. The Faversham Plan enables us to conserve, repurpose and reuse our heritage buildings to ensure they are fit for the future.

*AECOM were the infrastructure consultants employed to help in the neighbourhood plan creation.

FAVERSHAM CREEK

Faversham developed around the creek. It was at the heart of our town for centuries and brought a prosperity we can still observe in the architecture on Abbey Street. Sadly, in the 1980s we turned our back on the creek, lost the commercial port, and the creek silted up. So far, the town has been unsuccessful in gaining a swing bridge and making it navigable again for barges.

The new Faversham Plan seeks to "promote regeneration of brownfield and heritage sites" around the creek and to realise their economic, community and environmental potential. The Creek features heavily in the plan with both a dedicated set of Creekside Policies as well as designating a new Maritime Gateway Heritage Regeneration Area. The policies are wide-ranging but include securing a commitment from developers to provide and maintain and improve public access to the waterfront linking to the Public Rights of Way network and to the new King Charles III England Coast Path. All Creekside land allocated for development must be mixed use in nature, with policy encouraging business, hospitality, leisure, assembly, recreation, tourism and community uses. Residential use is restricted to upper floors and only where it is part of such mixed-use development. Furthermore, development will only be supported where it retains existing slipways and buildings and features that contribute to the special architectural or historic character of the Creekside.

At local government re-organisation in 1974, the ownership of Town Quay, *TS Hazard* and the 1911 Pump House ownership passed to Swale. The Town Council is close to re-securing ownership and recognising this; the new Faversham Plan creates an opportunity to develop the creek basin as a Maritime Gateway Heritage Regeneration Area. Details are in FAV EYE 16. Town Quay is important as an 'anchor site'

for regenerating the land around the basin. Creekside Boxing will continue to use the 1911 Pump House, The Sea Cadets no longer use the Town Warehouse, aka *TS Hazard*, and it will become available for multiple community uses once ownership passes back to the Town Council.

Many of you will remember the raft races, and now there is rowing on the creek. The Faversham Plan creates a planning framework designed to facilitate and encourage mixed-use development of the creek shore with public access to the creekside and complementing character of the Faversham Conservation Area as well as protecting the view of Davington Church over Ordnance Wharf.

There remains much to be done to secure a clean and navigable Creek, work essential to its long-term survival. Sympathetic economic redevelopment of the Creekside is not the whole answer, but we hope it can serve to support others who have made it their mission.

MAINTAINING A VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE

Few would disagree that our historic Town Centre with its 800-year-old charter market makes a characterful contribution to 'what makes Faversham special.' Despite the challenge, now common to high streets up and down the country, of large supermarkets and out of town retail parks, Faversham Town Centre continues to act as an attractive destination for both the community it serves and visitors to our town.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides policy needed to sustain the vitality and viability of our unique and distinctive town centre.

Ground floor frontages within the town will remain publicly accessible with the development of currently vacant upper floors for residential use, visitor accommodation and businesses encouraged. It will encourage ongoing independent and local retailing, provide protection for our heritage buildings whilst enabling appropriate diversification of use including personal healthcare and fitness food and drink, personal services, offices, recreational and cultural use. Importantly the plan recognises the importance of maintain parking adjacent to and within the Town Centre (not everyone can or wishes to walk or cycle) to maintain its commercial viability and consequently redevelopment of the existing car parks eg the Central, Queen's Hall and Institute Road Car Parks will be protected against residential development and will only be supported in the unlikely instance where a similar alternative provision can be made nearby. This is important because as well as providing car parking, these space provide open public realm for use for the festivals that form such an important part of our Town's character.

You can find out more about the Neighbourhood Plan from the exhibition in the town hall or from our website: <https://favershamsfuture.info/>

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Photo by Nathalie Banaigs



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By David Hadley and Matthew Hatchwell
Photos and graphics by Ken Pugh

E. COLI BACTERIA POLLUTION IN FAVERSHAM CREEK



E.coli is a bacterium found commonly in the guts of warm-blooded animals including humans

Pollution by E. coli is measured in terms of CFU (Colony-Forming Units) per 100 millilitres of water

Some E.coli are pathogenic and can cause serious food poisoning if ingested



Below: At the top of Faversham Creek; more than 10,000 CFU's have been recorded. Right: An E.coli colony - greatly magnified.

To our shame, the UK ranks consistently as one of the worst European countries for coastal water quality. Not a single stretch of river in England or Northern Ireland is in good overall health; just 14% achieve good ecological health.

According to the Environment Agency based on data received from water companies, in 2023 there were a total of 464,056 raw sewage discharges into English rivers, waterways and seas. This equates to 1,271 sewage spills per day, or nearly 10,000 hours of spills a day. Since these figures are based on self-reporting by water companies, there is a strong suspicion

that the true ones are even higher.

Sadly Faversham and its waterways are no exception to this sorry state of affairs. In May this year, a group of local volunteer citizen scientists from Faversham and outlying villages (Faversham Water Quality Group FAVWAT) began testing for E. coli bacteria in Faversham Creek. This was in addition to their continuing work

monitoring levels of phosphates and nitrates, which are a threat to the ecology of the Creek and Swale Estuary but not directly to public health.

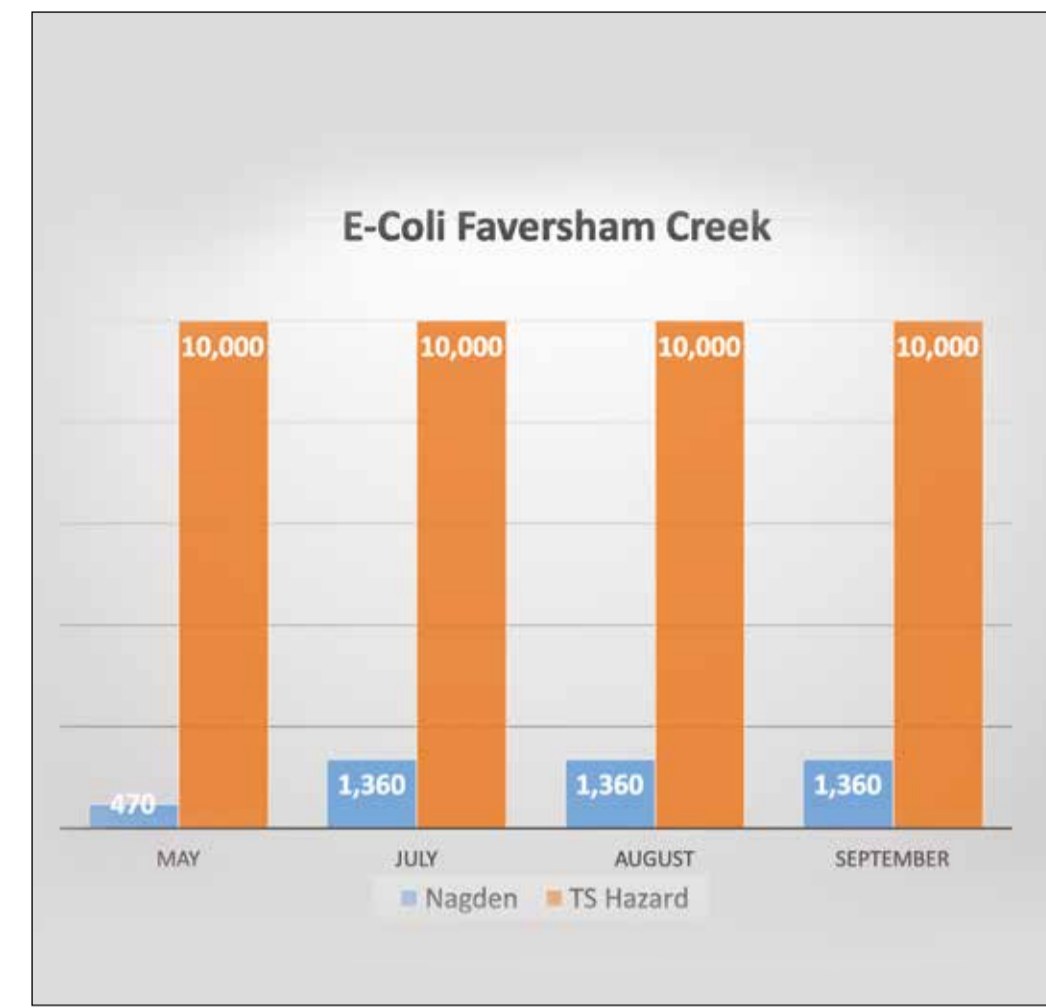
E.coli is a bacterium found commonly in the guts of warm-blooded animals including humans. Most E. coli strains are harmless – indeed they are beneficial as long as

they're inside our bodies – but some are pathogenic and can cause serious food poisoning if ingested. The E. coli testing tool used by FavWat is made by Aquagenx, an industry standard test for E.coli that does not require a laboratory to analyse water samples.

In addition to the partially treated sewage that is discharged legally into the Creek every day by the Faversham Wastewater Treatment Works, there are several Combined Sewer Overflows in the town that are designed to avoid overwhelming the sewage works by channelling rainwater and sewage into the Creek during heavy rainfall.

FavWat collected water samples from the Creek on a rising tide just before high water at Nagden (point X on the map, well below the sewage works) and at the top of the Creek next to TS Hazard on Town Quay (point Y).

Pollution by E. coli is measured in terms of CFU (Colony-Forming Units) per 100 millilitres of water. The



E. coli levels near TS Hazard compared to Nagden in 2024

monitoring results from Faversham Creek were as follows:

The consistently high levels of over 10,000 CFU/100ml at the head of the Creek are off the Aquagenx test scale – shockingly high and, without a doubt, hazardous to public health. For comparison, if coastal bathing water reaches a level of 500 CFU/100ml, it is designated 'poor quality'. At the Olympics this year, levels of 1,000 CFU/100ml led to the postponement of the triathlon swim in the Seine. At the Oxford-Cambridge boat race on the Thames this year, crews were ordered not to throw the cox in the water because of a level of 2869 CFU/100ml.

Where does this alarming level of E. coli in Faversham Creek come from?

The background level of 1,360 CFU/100ml in the water flowing into the Creek from the Swale Estuary is of concern in its own right. Rather than the tide taking the pollution away, it keeps bringing it back.

The rest of the 10,000+ CFU/100ml comes from the sewage system, from "black water" discharged from residential boats, from seepage from manure spread on fields adjacent to the Creek, from dogs, and from wildfowl on Stonebridge Pond. More sophisticated testing is needed to distinguish the relative contribution of animal and human waste but it is hard to imagine, given the extraordinary scale of it, that the major component of this increase is other than from sewage.



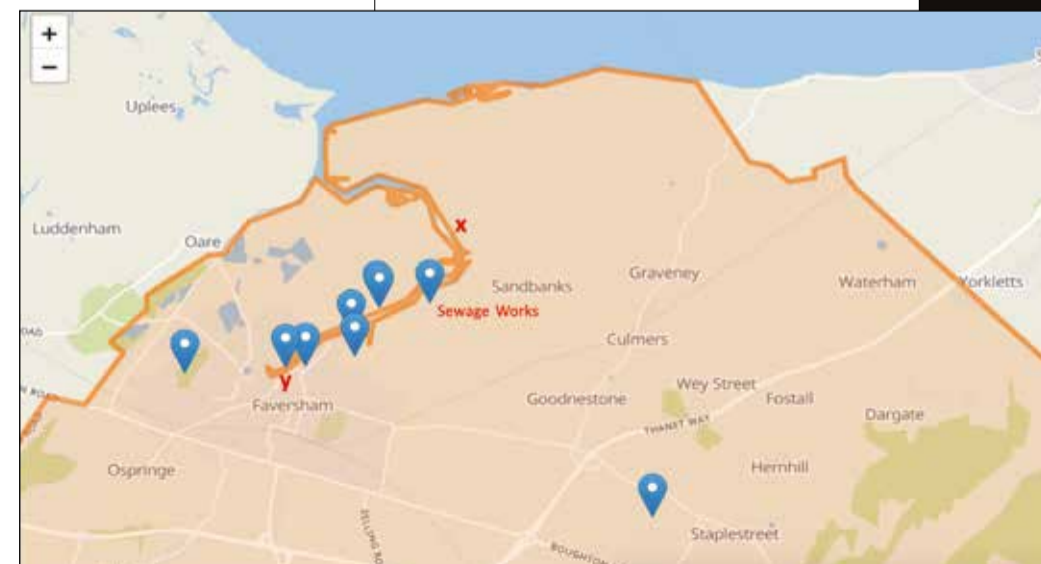
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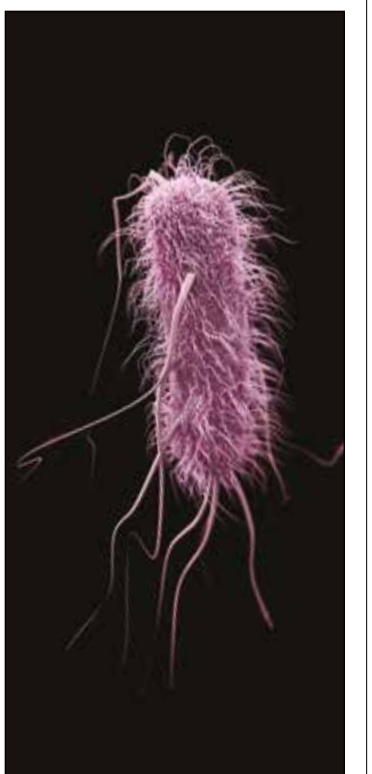
Where does this alarming level of E. coli in Faversham Creek come from?

Rather than the tide taking the pollution away, it keeps bringing it back

More sophisticated testing is needed to distinguish the relative contribution of animal and human waste



Above: Collection points for water samples along the length of Faversham Creek.



Faversham Creek by Malc McDonald



evidence is growing that companies are substantially underreporting the number of spills.

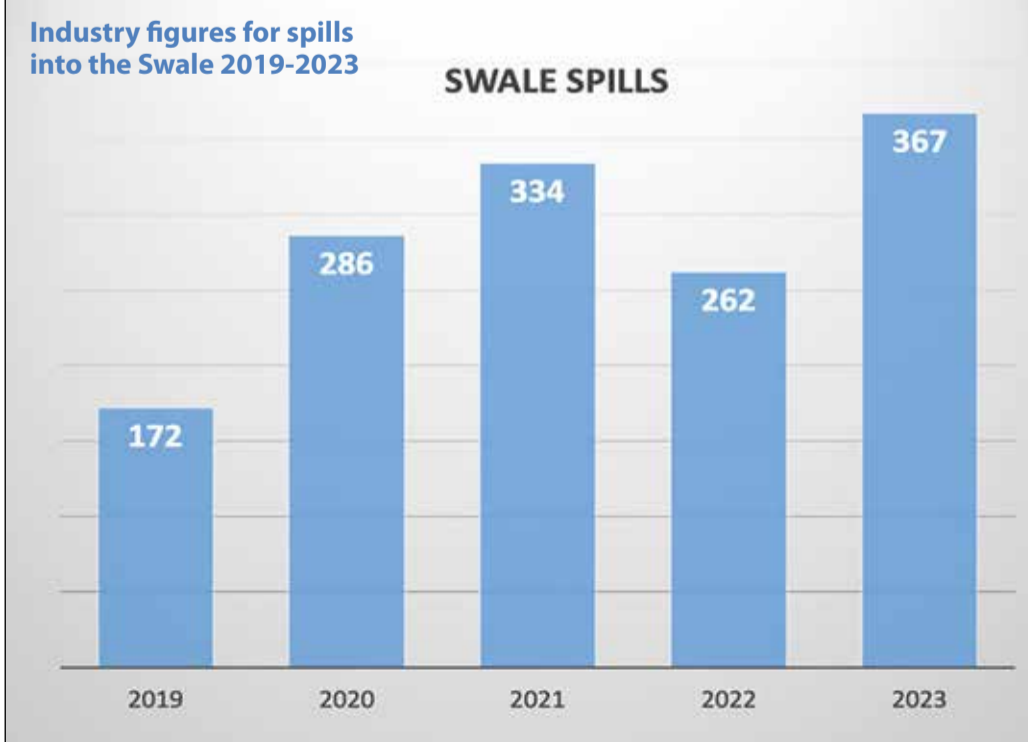
A 2022 House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee report on water quality contained evidence demonstrating that:

- Spills from CSOs were likely to be under reported by the water companies by a factor of ten;
- “Untreated sewage discharged from storm overflows during dry weather was likely to be the main source of microplastics in river sediment”; and that;
- “Sewage treatment works and the rivers they discharge into were becoming breeding grounds for antimicrobial resistance”.

We know from Environment Agency data that the sewage works still legally deposits high levels of E. coli in its partially treated effluent – 330,000 CFU/100ml at the last count – but we suspect that the other major contributors are untreated spills from the Combined Sewer Overflows.

There is a convincing body of evidence that CSOs – originally designed to manage high levels of run-off during rainstorms – are routinely and illegally used by water companies as a substitute for improving their inadequately maintained infrastructure. Figures provided to the Environment Agency by the water companies are under scrutiny and

Even using industry supplied figures, spills into the Swale have doubled since 2019 with increases every year apart from 2022 which was one of the driest years on record. Using these dubious figures, published only annually, there is still, on average, more than one spill a



week into Faversham Creek.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee summarises: “The sewerage system is overloaded and unable to cope with the increasing pressures of housing development, the impact of heavier rainfall, and a profusion of plastic and other non-biodegradable waste clogging up the system. Successive governments, water companies and regulators have grown complacent and seem resigned to maintaining pre-Victorian practices of dumping sewage in rivers.”

To help reduce the too frequent spills, Southern Water promised to increase the size of the storm tanks at the Faversham works. These tanks are intended to hold overflow temporarily and then pump it back into the works for treatment later.

An Environmental Information Request to Southern Water gave the volume of the existing tanks as 2,080 cubic metres. They have still to deliver the promised increase but report it will add 200 cubic metres. The dry flow permit for the sewage works is 290 cubic metres an hour. An industry insider tells us that sewage works are designed to cope with six times dry flow in storm conditions, i.e. 1,740 cubic meters an hour in Faversham’s case. FavWat’s calculation suggests that the 10% volume increase will provide an extra 15 minutes’ storage capacity in such conditions before a spill.

Levels of E. coli in the Westbrook chalk stream are also high, at 1,360 CFU/100ml, possibly as the result of sewer misconnections from the houses along the stream, a worrying sign for the health of a chalk stream and another contributor to the pollution of the Creek. Southern Water has been alerted to this potential problem but has not responded.

The results of water quality monitoring by FavWat have triggered the creation of a working group on water pollution by Faversham Town Council. FavWat will continue regularly monitoring and reporting on the levels of E. coli, phosphates and nitrates in the Creek and the streams that feed into it. Its next step is to raise £1,000+ to buy a sophisticated oxygen meter to provide instant spot readings of the overall ecological health of the water along the Creek, streams and Swale estuary, supplementing the readings for individual pollutants. FavWat is also working with other groups in the area to address water pollution problems in the Thames Estuary as a whole.

Combined Sewer Overflows are routinely and illegally used by water companies as a substitute for improving their inadequately maintained infrastructure

Evidence is growing that companies are substantially underreporting the number of spills

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THE TASTES OF FAVERSHAM

MASTER BREW

In Faversham Eye Issue 3, we commissioned a highly experienced team of four real ale tasters to sample the Master Brew bitter produced by Faversham brewers Shepherd Neame and sold in ten of the central Faversham pubs. The results we published then showed a remarkable variation in condition and quality of the drinks served to our researchers.

That was in April 2019, so it seemed a good idea to revisit the same ten public houses nearly five years later to discover how much, if anything, had changed. It is important to note that a significant number of the establishments have had management changes since the first survey.

As before to ensure uniformity, all the beers were tasted on the same evening over a single four-hour period. As all the samples must have come from the same brewing batch and have been delivered to the pubs on roughly the same date, the difference in the quality of the beer being sold would be a good indicator of the care taken by the different establishments in their cellaring and line hygiene procedures. Allowance was made where possible for beer served from the end of a barrel.

The research team were led by Prof Glyn Roberts, Honorary Fellow of the University of West Ospringe.

Generally, the relative order of the pubs, in terms of quality of beer they served, was reasonably consistent with the previous ratings - the exception being the Railway Hotel which had been highly praised in 2019 but failed to impress our tasters this time with a bitter that had a nasty metallic aftertaste.

The Three Tuns in Tanner Street was unanimously judged to have served the best glass of Master Brew in the ten establishments visited, an improvement on their third place five years earlier. It is also notable that in this pub the average annual price increase of a pint was the lowest at 3.5%.

The three pubs that were judged worst in 2019 were also at the bottom this time and ironically these were also the ones that had increased their prices the most. On the assumption that Shepherd Neame cares about the retail condition of their flagship product, especially in their hometown of Faversham, it is somewhat surprising that in their managed and tenanted outlets at least, they don’t make a greater effort to ensure it is kept and sold in better condition.

PUB	2024				2019		
	POSITION	MARKS /120	PRICE per PINT	Average annual price increase	POSITION	MARKS /120	PRICE per PINT
The Tree Tuns	1	99	£4.30	3.50%	3	99	£3.60
The Bear Inn	2	91	£4.60	4.40%	2	103	£3.70
The Market Inn	3	89	£4.60	4.10%	6	87	£3.75
The Anchor	4	85	£4.60	5%	4	91	£3.60
The Three Mariners	5	84	£4.70	5.60%	7	85	£3.60
The Sun Inn	6	78	£4.85	5.60%	5	80	£3.70
The Railway Hotel	7	73	£4.60	5%	1	104	£3.60
The Limes	8	51	*£5.25	7.40%	10	8	*£3.80
The Bull Inn	9	45	£4.80	6.10%	8	68	£3.60
The Albion Taverna	10	38	£5.10	6.50%	9	63	£3.75

SURVEY RESULTS

*Spitfire bitter





THE 51ST SWALE SMACK & SAILING BARGE MATCH

By the time of this year's Swale Match, on Saturday the 10 August, the weather had acquired the distinct feel of summer but, as has been the case over some recent matches, it blew hard on the Friday and a number of entries from the Essex rivers decided not to battle their way across the Thames to Kent. But despite these casualties to the vagaries of the English summer, there was a good turnout and, including the small open gaffers, we had more than forty entries.

A magnificent orange sun rose above Shellness at dawn on Saturday and the forecast was for a Force 4 south-westerly breeze – pretty much a perfect day for racing. We started early to catch the tide – the first barges heading off at 7am – and the fleet had a gentle run out towards the wind farm and then a fast reach into Herne Bay as the wind got up; and that was followed a long beat home to Harty Ferry and the finish line. The sun shone for most of the day and the wind never rose much above 15 mph so that the smacks and smaller vessels carried their topsails throughout.

The beautifully-rebuilt smack *Yet* won the BMM Weston Trophy for the fastest elapsed time of any smack or barge, and was the only vessel to finish in less than four hours. Second place went to the big Essex-based smack *ADC*. The bowsprit barge *Edme* won Class 3 and was followed home by *Marjorie*. Class 4, the Fast Staysail Barges, was won by *Ironsides*, based at the Iron Wharf on Faversham Creek and racing in the Swale Match for the first time for some years. And she was followed by *Niagara*, *Wyvenhoe*, *Edith May* and then *Repertor*, 100 years old this year and another Faversham-based barge. *Lady of the Lea*, owned by the editor of this esteemed paper and being the only barge to enter the Slow Staysail Class this year, sailed a lonely race of one to win the Brents Cup.

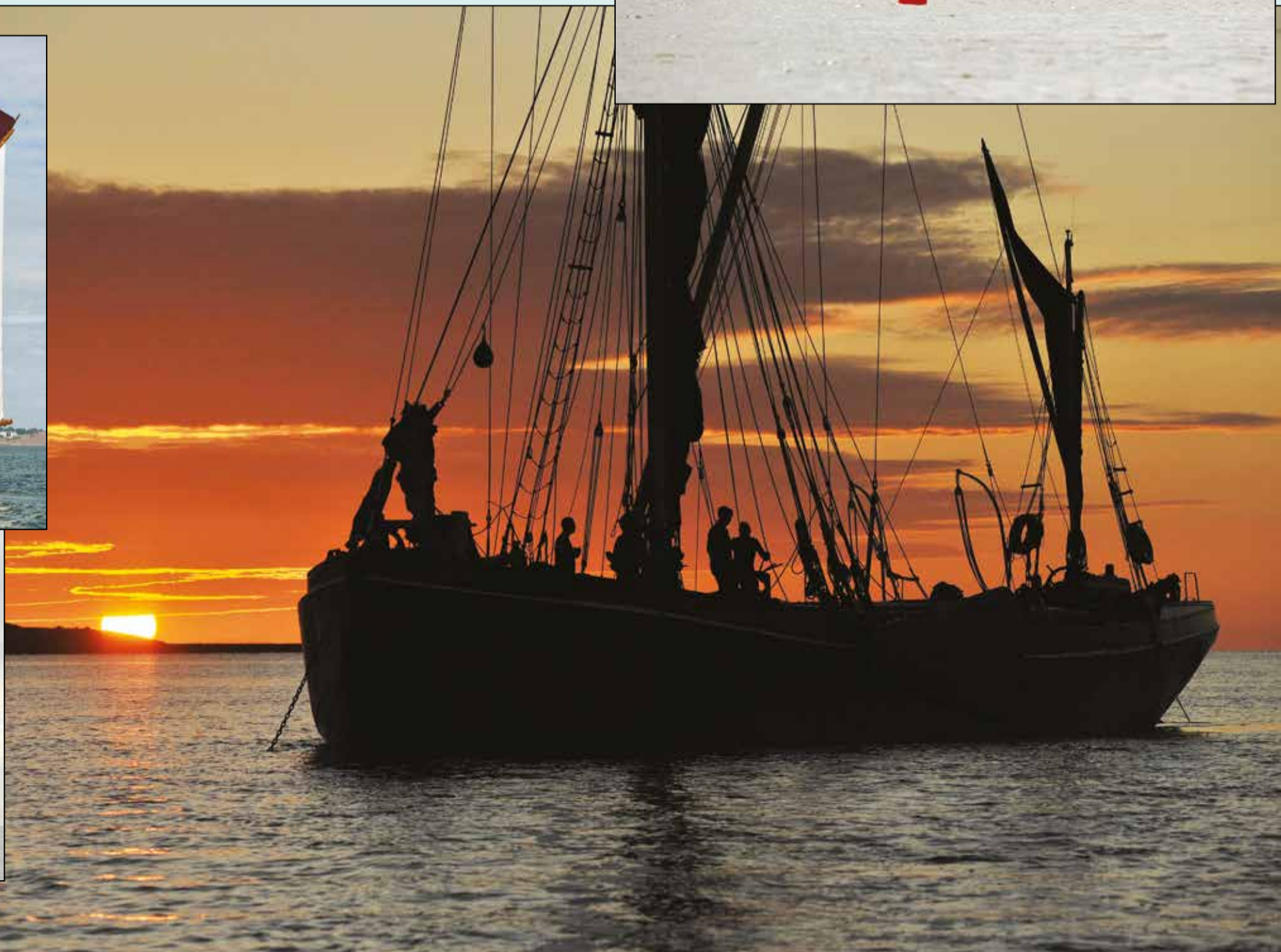
The week before witnessed the annual race for small Open Gaffers (16ft or under), sailed in the creek off Hollowshore. A lunchtime tide and the proximity of the Shipwright's bar have made this event grow in popularity and this year eleven gaff-rigged dinghies entered, while the skiffs from the Faversham Rowing Club also joined in to lend colour and activity to the creek. First on elapsed time and on handicap was *Orion* and second *Lady Ann*, built by the Faversham boatbuilder Dick Dadson back in the '60s.

The Swale Match is unique on the East Coast for welcoming a wide range of traditional and vintage craft and it was a pleasure to see such venerable vessels as the Humber motor barge *Selby Ellen*, the lovely gentleman's motor yacht *Lilian* of Stockholm as well as a fleet of classic Bermudan-rigged boats. They all play such a valuable role in keeping alive the story of our maritime past. And the annual Swale Match helps keep alive the memories of the creek in the days of sail and oar.

In the early evening there was a prize-giving and party for skippers and crews in the yard at Hollowshore. The beer flowed and the music drifted over the now slumbering river; it had been a perfect day's racing.

The beautiful Kentish Sail Association calendar for 2025 is now available and can be purchased in the Information Centre, at Creek Creative, the Fleur de Lis bookshop or Tales on Market Street.

By Julian Mannering



BINGATE

WASTE NOT WANT NOT



The council opted to go with the only provider which submitted a final bid – Suez

Unfortunately, since Suez's takeover in March, waste collection has become one of Faversham's most frustrating public services

Rural areas previously served by standard ('full size') lorries were now mostly served by inefficient narrow vehicles

Narrow urban rounds in Faversham previously served by narrow vehicles had been assigned to the larger vehicles

Over 60% of households were getting a change of collection day



All the way back in 2021, the administration at Swale made a decision to re-tender for a company to take on its waste collection services. The outcome of the process that followed was the council opting to go with the only



provider which submitted a final bid – Suez. Despite only having one bid on the table, Suez's bid was considered a good one and represented good value. Having said this, I think it should also be noted that commencing a new tender process at that point would have taken months and cost tens of thousands of pounds.

Unfortunately, since Suez's takeover in March, waste collection has become one of Faversham's most frustrating public services, plagued by inefficiencies, a lack of communication from the council, and an overwhelming volume of issues. If Faversham residents groups on Facebook had trending topics, I'm sure the hashtag #bingate would have been pretty high up during most of April, May and June.

DELAYED DATA AND DYSFUNCTIONAL ROUTES

When Suez initially took on the contract, the expectation was that collection rounds would be fine-tuned and efficient, minimising disruptions. However, a major problem was brewing before the changeover of providers even took place: crucial round data, expected months before the contract began, arrived far too late. The data that finally arrived in late January (which I finally got a chance to see in April) appeared to have been set up hastily, without the necessary sense checking to ensure they were fit for purpose. Rural areas previously served by standard ('full size') lorries were now mostly served by inefficient narrow vehicles and narrow urban rounds in Faversham previously served by narrow vehicles had been assigned to the larger ones, apparently based on the naive assumption that no one would park their cars near tight corners!

In addition to this, the initial expectation of the council was that around 20-30% of the Borough would see a change in their collection day, which seemed manageable

in theory. When the data finally arrived, we learned that over 60% of households were getting a change of collection day. This huge change, along with changes to the staff assigned to each route, left residents confused, inconvenienced and, in many cases, dealing with days' worth of uncollected waste. Missed collections became an unfortunate norm rather than an exception, leading to growing piles of rubbish on streets and a steep rise in complaints from residents who were understandably frustrated with the failing service.

SYSTEM COLLAPSE AND REPORTING OVERLOAD

The widespread missed collections and altered schedules created an overwhelming influx of reports to the council's systems. The online reporting system was quickly inundated, unable to keep pace with the sheer volume of complaints and the customer service lines were overloaded too.

As missed pickups accumulated, it became impossible for the council's contract monitoring officers staff to isolate and address the systemic issues causing the failures, and the cases that were identified and considered 'fixed' were in many cases simply missed again a week or two later. A situation which was intensely frustrating for residents and officers alike.

COMMUNICATION FAILURES

Communication (or lack of) from the council to residents has also been a source of great frustration. Initially the plan was to report (on social media) the percentage of bins which had been collected each day. This was unhelpful as even if 97% have been collected, if you are

one of the 3%, it means very little.

Proactive communication is not viable, as even when the council's officers are informed of Suez's plans for catch up rounds for the following day in their evening meetings, those plans fail to materialise so frequently that it was considered best to say nothing rather than cause additional frustration by making promises we have no control in seeing through. This void of communication has left residents and council members alike with little to no confidence in what to expect.

MID-SEPTEMBER RE-ROUTE: A GLIMMER OF HOPE?

In mid-September, Suez initiated a major re-routing effort to address the widespread issues, finally implementing changes that, for the first time, seemed to make a significant impact. Collections began to stabilise, and missed pickups dropped noticeably. By November, waste collection was at a point of reliability that the community should have seen back in May. It has been a relief for many households to have their waste collected consistently, without the missed pickups and disruptions that marked the earlier months of the contract.

However, the fact remains that this level of service improvement arrived much later than promised.

Residents have endured months of substandard waste collections and huge levels of frustration, and in some cases genuine anxiety as a result of the poor service and lack of effective communication.

ONGOING FRUSTRATIONS

Despite these improvements, certain areas around Faversham still experience frustrating and recurring issues. Some streets, continue to face missed collections week after week. No matter what interventions the council officers put in place, these same issues seem to re-emerge, often within a matter of days. This repetitive cycle of missed collections and unresolved issues casts a shadow over the service improvements made since September.

LOOKING AHEAD: TRANSPARENCY NEEDED

The introduction of Suez as Swale's waste collection provider was expected to bring a seamless, efficient service to the community. I firmly believe that this could still be the case, but there is still work to be done.

Another key piece of work currently being undertaken is a full Scrutiny Review of the tendering process and the implementation period of the new contract. I am chairing a panel of councillors to look closely at every aspect of the new contract and the changeover. We have identified a number of failures both on the part of Suez and at the council, and will be creating a report to present to the Swale Environment and Climate Change committee in January.

The report will identify the key areas of failure (both from Suez and from the council) and will contain a list of recommendations for the council going forward to hopefully ensure we don't see a repeat of the pain of the past few months.



Residents confused, inconvenienced and, in many cases, dealing with days' worth of uncollected waste

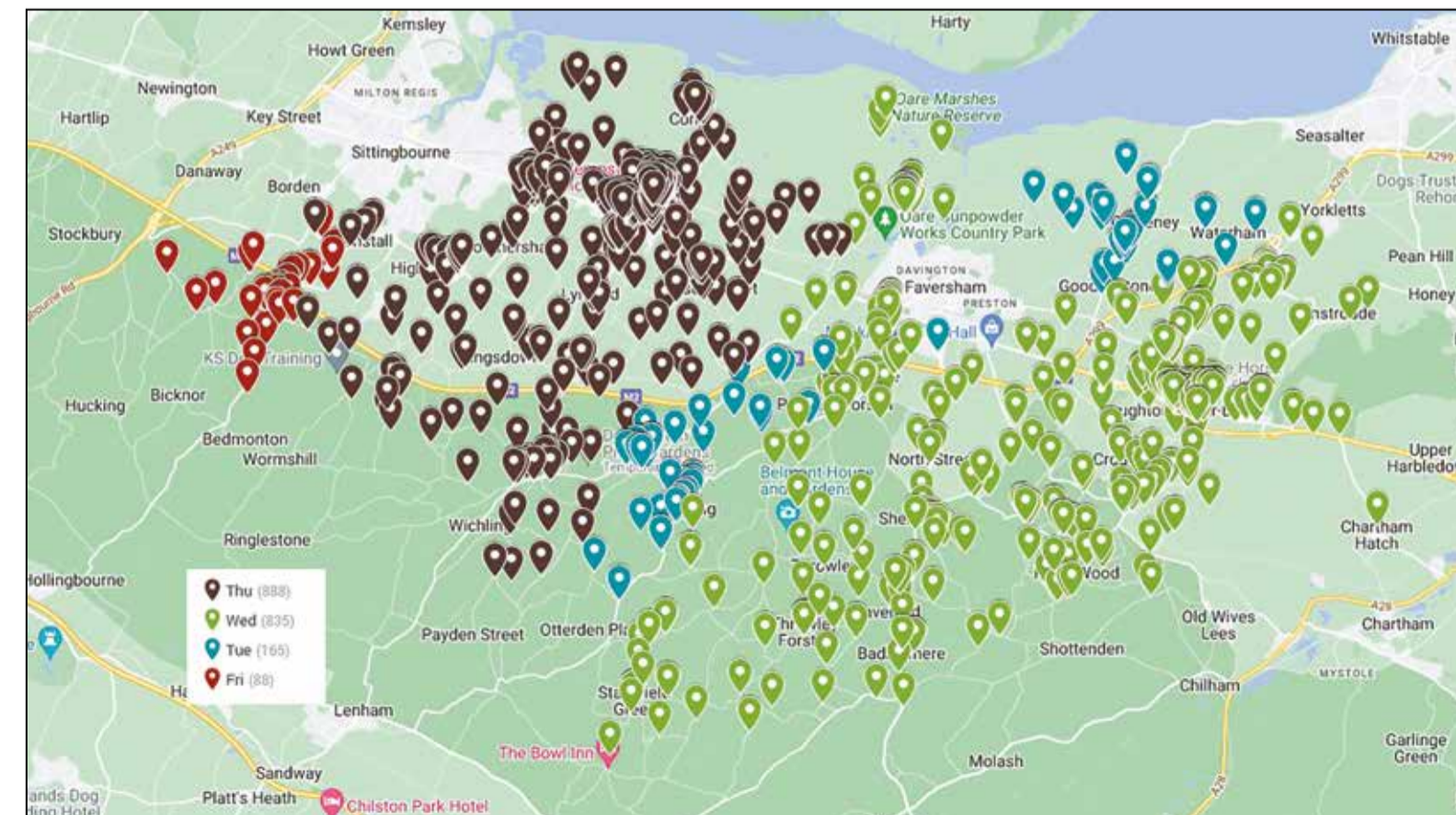
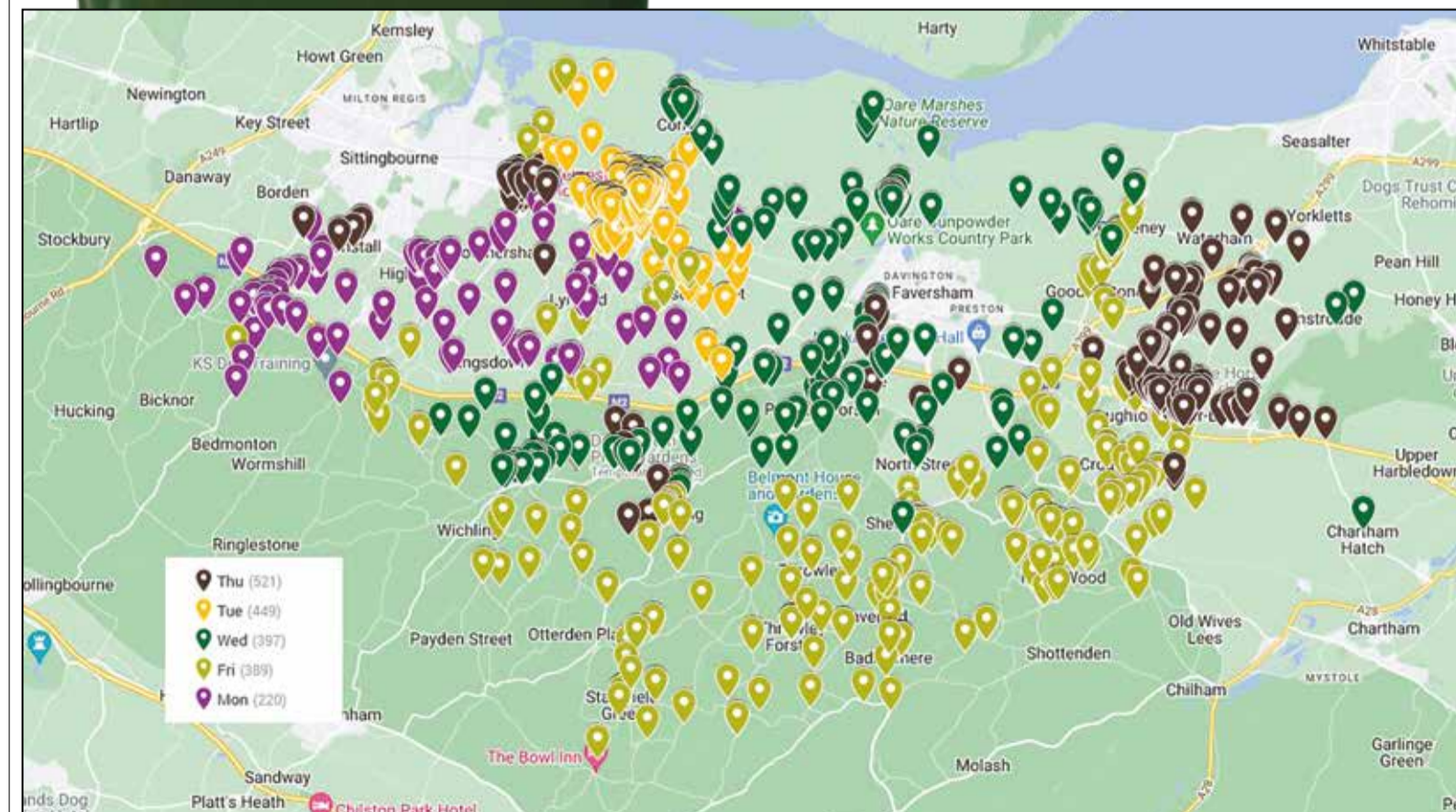
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Collections began to stabilise, and missed pickups dropped noticeably

However, the fact remains that this level of service improvement arrived much later than promised

Some streets, continue to face missed collections week after week



Below left: The previous bin collection days before the new revised routes. Below: The new revised waste collection days.

Editor's note: Since writing this, Southern Water is being refinanced by hedge (vulture) funds who will inevitably hold consumers to ransom.

FAVERSHAM'S OWN WATERFALL

I am sitting in the front room of my house on South Road on a warm mid-summer morning. Normally I would hear the zoom, zoom of boy racers using the straight stretch outside the almshouses as Faversham's version of the Le Mans racetrack's Mulsanne Straight. (20mph speed limit anyone?)

Instead, I hear the joyful twittering of birds and the gentle burble of a waterfall. Have I passed on to a better place?

No, the restoration of the sounds of nature is due to the combined efforts of South East Water which supplies the road's drinking water and Southern Water which has a sewer close to my house. The necessity for deep excavation has resulted in the road being blocked, eliminating the roar of motor vehicles, while drinking water flows from a broken freshwater pipe near the surface into the abyss of a holed sewer pipe five meters below.

anything as, although it had broken the pipeline, only South East Water could repair it.

Next day in the morning nothing had happened. The "ticket" passed from Southern to South East had gone AWOL.

After increasingly agitated calls, as my 96 year old mother lived with us, I was told that another "ticket" had been issued and South East Water would come soon. I was also told a "liaison officer" would visit but none ever came (and no one throughout the whole month plus time ever proactively explained what was happening). A young contractor took pity and brought us some bottled water.

Twenty four hours after being cut off freshwater was restored. The excavation and repair of the sewer took weeks further.

The house was duly billed £900 by South East Water instead of the usual £300. My wife phoned up and explained the situation and was told the money would not be direct debited out of our account. But it was. More phone calls and it was at least refunded.

The takeaway from all this is that Southern Water and South East Water don't efficiently talk to each other and don't talk to customers at all. Also, repairs will take much longer than expected and carry considerable risk.

Is this a one-off in Faversham? The answer is almost certainly no. My house was probably built about 1890 and has rusted cast iron freshwater pipes and cracking brick sewers. Several holes have since been dug in South Road and more seem likely across Victorian and older Faversham.

SO WHO OWNS SOUTHERN WATER AND SOUTH EAST WATER?

Southern Water is owned by a group of investors through Greensands Holdings Limited (GSH)
Macquarie Asset Management 62%
JP Morgan Asset Management 15%
UBS Asset Management 8%
Hermes Infrastructure Funds 8%
Whitehelm Capital 8%
South East Water is owned by a group of investors through HDF (UK) Holdings Ltd
Utilities of Australia 50%
NatWest Pension Trustee 25%

three entities of the Desjardins cooperative financial group
- Régime de rentes du Mouvement Desjardins 12.5%
- Desjardins Financial Security Life Assurance Company 6.25%
- Certas Home and Auto Insurance Company 6.25%

Clearly, both companies are majority owned by foreign entities. Also, the name Macquarie should strike fear into any utility user.

WATER—AN ABJECT LESSON OF PRIVATISATION AND REGULATORY FAILURE?

In July Thames Water became the first water company put in a "turnaround oversight regime" by water regulator Ofwat which could result in restructuring or renationalisation. Thames had over £15bn debt and only sufficient funds to trade until June 2025. It was majority owned by Macquarie from 2006 (Labour government) to 2017 when it doubled debt to £11bn. Macquarie bought a majority stake in Southern Water in 2021. Southern Water, also on Ofwat's watch list of financially at-risk companies, is seen as the water company most likely to follow Thames into special measures. In October it said it needed to raise £4.5bn over the next five years. Late in October Ofwat revealed that Southern wants to raise annual bills from £420 to £772 by 2029. (Southern has also asked customers to apply water-saving measures and proposes importing bottled Norwegian water.)

South East Water is also on Ofwat's watch list. In July South East Water said it needed a cash injection from investors. "If it is not possible to raise the additional liquidity, the group and therefore company would not have sufficient liquidity for the going concern period." South East Water has been apologising profusely to the disgusted of Tunbridge Wells where the mains have burst three times. (if mains have to be burst Tunbridge Wells is probably not the best place. This bluest of seats is now yellow.)

How did we get into this position? When the water companies were privatised in 1991 it was recognised that significant investment was required. They were listed without any debt on the (naïve) assumption



On a Monday morning, without warning, South Road was blocked off between Stone Street and Plantation [Street]

Many weeks later the digger started to remove the road surface to the south of the existing hole

No one throughout the whole month plus time ever proactively explained what was happening

The takeaway from all this is that Southern Water and South East Water don't efficiently talk to each other and don't talk to customers at all

Is this a one-off in Faversham? The answer is almost certainly no



FAVERSHAM EVENTS

Faversham Christmas Markets Weekend

9-10th December 2023



that the much-needed investment would be funded by a combination of revenue, new equity and modest debt. Instead, the regulator OFWAT and the government of the day (Conservative and Labour) have sat on their hands while the inherent justification of privatisation, such as it was, has been ignored and supposedly safe cash generators have been turned into debt-ridden nightmares.

Water companies have proved singularly vulnerable to financial engineering greatly facilitated by two factors:

● Firstly, debt financing is cheaper (but riskier) than equity as the former is paid out of taxed but the latter out of untaxed income. Thus, replacing equity with debt is justified on the grounds of balance sheet "efficiency" as lowering the overall cost of capital. (Very convenient when replaced equity is paid out as dividends (that is not used to fund investment) and fat bonuses are paid to the financial engineers.)

● Secondly, if all the quoted shareholder equity is bought out and the company falls under control of private equity then advantage can be taken by the new owners of "carried interest" (profits paid to the private equity groups' managers as performance fees) which mean that

private equity owners are taxed on carried forward profits at lower capital gains rates (24%) rather than higher income tax rates (45%). (Again, very convenient for the private equity purchasers of company but resulting in opaqueness as there are no inconvenient shareholders asking questions and the interests of consumers, employees and the environment can be passed over.)

The problem is that this is all in the past, the useless regulator OFWAT and governments having allowed it to happen. Water companies are borrowed up to the gills, have little or no money to invest and cannot borrow much more (several are either already effectively bust or close to it). Their assets have been "sweated" to exhaustion.) The investment that is manifestly necessary, see Faversham, in both replacing existing Victorian infrastructure and building new, as the town expands, can only come from raising prices or owner cash injections.

It is, however, all very well OFWAT and ministers bleating that water price increases must be restricted in the next 2025-30 regulatory period following the 2024 price review. The fact is, however, that the largely foreign owners of English water companies are unlikely to provide

more money as the risk is so high and the effective return so low.

Financial engineers and private equity groups only do what they can get away with. It is the regulator and governments who should really be held to account and they have to be honest with the public—they cannot recover the moneys that have already been paid out to investors by water companies, rather than be used to fund investment, as lacking either the means or the will to do so.

Sadly, OFWAT and ministers need to come clean explain that we will face higher water prices (largely due to their incompetence) or places like Faversham will see many more incidents like the one which resulted in weeks of disruption outside my house as decrepit systems are patched up rather than rebuilt.

Or they can let many of the water companies go bust, wipe out investors, and renationalise them (which might be good as private investors would get the message that the point of privatisation was that financial risk would be transferred to those who chose to invest and not remain with taxpayers). The result, however, will still be that, as the result of regulatory and ministerial failure, consumers still eventually paid higher prices.



Water companies have proved singularly vulnerable to financial engineering

Water companies are borrowed up to the gills, and have little or no money to invest

Faversham will see many more incidents like the one which resulted in weeks of disruption outside my house as decrepit systems are patched up rather than rebuilt



GRISELDA CANN MUSSETT

17.09.1948 - 16.08.2024



On the 11th of September the Alexander Centre was packed with people attending the reception following the funeral of Griselda. It was difficult negotiating a path through the interlinked rooms all crowded with well-wishers and it was a testament to the affection and esteem with which she was held by many in Faversham and elsewhere.

Amongst her many achievements, she was one of the founding members of Friends of Faversham Creek the first organisation to fight to try to halt the decline of the creek and the creek-side following the closure of the water-based businesses and the swing bridge. During this time the Friends led the fight against a proposed vast and very speculative housing and industrial development to the East of the Town. After three unsuccessful appeals by the developers to overturn planning refusals they finally went bankrupt.

In the 1990s Griselda also helped establish the very remarkable Faversham Physic Garden which this year celebrates its 30th year bringing pleasure, comfort and therapy to thousands of local people.

Of the many tributes to her life that have been written since her death, I have chosen two which give a sense of her contribution to the town and the loss felt by people who knew her well.



NATHALIE BANAIGS WROTE:

Griselda Mussett was one of the first names that popped up when I moved to Faversham in 2003, looking for creative people and community champions. I was told "you need to meet Griselda". When I did, I knew I knew why she was mentioned.

Life is funny like that, isn't it? You stumble across people, acquaintances and friends, and sometimes, they leave a special mark that stays forever. Griselda was one of those to me. I can't think of her without a smile.

She was a bundle of energy and ideas, always off on a new project with enthusiasm. She was, quite simply, unstoppable. To give you an idea of her spirit: someone recently posted on social media that she was on a course learning Italian and still writing her book on women of Faversham just four days before she left us. That's Griselda, still learning, still reaching for more.

Her passion for art and creativity was something we shared. Griselda believed art was important as a way of seeing, feeling and communicating. Her own work was a testament to this. She poured herself into it, whether she was capturing Faversham in her sketches or creating self-portraits during her illness. Through her art, she showed us both beauty and vulnerability. That dedication touched me.

Even when she faced illness, she seemed positive, facing each day with that strong spirit. Her final years battling cancer showed the depth of her resilience, and I think we will all carry a piece of that with us.

She inspired everyone that knew her, shining like a star, always herself and utterly irreplaceable.

ELDON HINCHCLIFFE SAID:

"Griselda truly was a colossus among people who campaigned for Faversham, and she will be sorely missed. She gave so much time and sheer enthusiasm for the good causes she espoused, and it really made a beneficial difference to the outcome."

PROFESSOR CHRIS WRIGHT

Professor Chris Wright BSc PhD ACGI MICE CEng FIHT CMath FIMA is Emeritus Professor of Transport Management, Middlesex University, London.

Originally trained as a civil engineer, for the last 45 years he has specialised in transport research, becoming a chartered mathematician in 1995. He has been chairman of the Executive Committee of the (UK) Universities Transport Study Group, and a member of several professional committees including the editorial board of the Municipal Engineer. He has advised the London Assembly on aspects of the Mayor's transport policy, has appeared on a number of radio and TV programmes, and produced over 150 research papers in the transport field.

Chris was a founding Director of the Whitstable Improvement Trust, a past Chair and Patron of the Faversham Creek Trust, and in 2024, he retired as a trustee of the Faversham Society. He contributed to the development of the forthcoming Faversham Neighbourhood Plan and continued to take an interest in local transport and development issues.

Chris was Chair of the Trust during 2013-2015 and led the Board through the highly successful 'Swing the Bridge' fundraising campaign. He later accepted the invitation to become our third Patron, joining Sir David Melville and Lady Sondes. He will be much missed, along with Griselda, Bob and Gulliver. It has been a particularly sad year for the Trust.

By Philippa Dickenson, Chair, Faversham Creek Trust



FOODBANKS WHO USES THEM AND WHY?

Below: Josh Rowlands, the assistant project manager in the warehouse where the food is stored, picked and packed into food parcels. Josh is also the current mayor of Faversham.



Above: A volunteer greets a client at the foodbank.

Right: Magdalen Deakins, the Foodbank project manager, outside the Gospel Mission building.

Below: A volunteer sorts items in one of the foodbank's three warehouses. Over the course of a year more than three and a half tonnes of food will be received and distributed.

the local churches in 2014, demand has risen steadily year-on-year. For each of the past five years, the amount of support given to local people has increased by 30 per cent compared to the year before. The foodbank now gives out the equivalent of more than 14,000 meals a year.

If you talk to clients of the foodbank, you will hear many different stories as to why they need food to get them through a crisis. Individuals may not make the best decisions, which affects the course of their lives but also luck, or lack of it, can have a significant effect. People who once had secure jobs and incomes find themselves having to go to the foodbank after a time of unemployment. Universal Credit and other benefits are meant to 'pick up the slack' but they frequently don't. It is easy to be 'sanctioned' by the Department of Work and Pensions, who frequently make errors on individual's accounts and accuse claimants of failing to follow the strict rules. Any deviation, for whatever reason, results in loss of money.

Then there are the 'working poor': people who are in full-time employment but do not earn enough to keep a roof over their head and to put food on the table. Not able to apply for benefits - and many are unwilling to do so, even if they are eligible for state-funded support - the foodbank is the only alternative to try

and break the cycle of failing to have enough between each pay day.

Other reasons why people struggle to support themselves and their families include depression, family break-up, health problems which prevent them from working and, very commonly, mental ill-health.

The foodbank keeps up with the ever increasing demand for support thanks to the generosity of local people who donate through the town's three supermarkets. Harvest festival collections from schools and churches provide a welcome boost before Christmas, a particularly busy time of the year.

GETTING HELP AND GIVING SUPPORT

The How to Get Help section of the foodbank's website lists the local agencies, including schools, which can issue foodbank vouchers and many can also provide further resources and support. Located at the Gospel Mission on the corner of Tanners Street and Napleton Road, the foodbank is open from 1.30-4pm on Wednesdays and Fridays.

You can donate food at the collection points located in the town's branches of Aldi, Sainsbury's and Tesco, or bring it to the foodbank during opening hours. Download the **BanktheFood** app and there is a regularly updated list of products the foodbank needs most.

Five years' ago, Jane (not her real name) started a relationship with a man who she believed would be a loving and caring partner. He seemed genuinely interested in her three children and wanted them to be a family.

"Once we started living together, he took control. He was very strict with the kids and told them they could only see friends he 'approved' of."

"If I wanted to go out, I had to tell him exactly who I was seeing and where I was going. I had to be home no later than the time he decided," Jane recalls.

"He took the money I earned, leaving me with £50 a week to buy the food to feed the five of us - and he was furious when I couldn't do it."

Jane and the children left their London home a few days after her partner called her eldest daughter a "dirty slag" because she had started her periods.

"Why did I come to Faversham? Because I didn't know anyone here. I am anonymous and that means he can't find me or the children," Jane says.

"Now, I am free but I have nothing but debts. Someone helped me with a plan to pay them off, but it leaves me with very little money for food, paying the electric and stuff that I need for the kids."

Citizens Advice Swale gave Jane a foodbank voucher and explained that the volunteers based at the foodbank in Tanners Street would give her enough emergency food to ensure she and her children wouldn't go hungry.

"I have needed to go back to the foodbank several times while I'm getting things sorted out but the volunteers understand why I need to go there. I don't like accepting charity but it's what I must do to make sure my children have food," Jane says.

Many people who live in Faversham are surprised the town has a foodbank because they believe the are is relatively prosperous. The reality is that since Faversham Foodbank was started by



Many people who live in Faversham are surprised the town has a foodbank because they believe the are is relatively prosperous

The reality is that since Faversham Foodbank was started by the local churches in 2014, demand has risen steadily year-on-year

Faversham Foodbank Gospel Mission Hall Tanners Street Faversham Kent ME13 7JL

OPENING TIMES WEDNESDAY 1.30pm to 4.00pm FRIDAY 1.30pm to 4.00pm

e: info@faversham.foodbank.org.uk t: 07938 720 604 answer phone



428

Trussell Trust Foodbanks in the UK

2014

the year that our foodbank opened

14220

individual meals given out in Faversham last year



If you talk to clients of the foodbank, you will hear many different stories

People who once had secure jobs and incomes find themselves having to go to the foodbank after a time of unemployment

You can donate food at the collection points located in the town's branches of Aldi, Sainsbury's and Tesco, or bring it to the foodbank during opening hours



FAVERSHAM FRINGE

You might be surprised to learn that Faversham Fringe has just celebrated its eighth year.

Taking place over three weeks in October and making use of three venues in town, attendees could choose from a wildly varied programme, among them cabaret, comedy, drama, drag, hypnosis, magic, mentalism, panto and poetry. Organisers and performers were out in force at weekends, promoting their own shows and distributing distinctive pink flyers, many of which offered discounted admission for already reasonable ticket prices.

Life's commitments allowed me only two opportunities to sample what was available, annoyin because I was intrigued by at least 8 of the listings. The Fourth Witch of Faversham, a shortplay on October 5th, was my first choice and clearly popular with many others. The production, successfully delivered by a cast of only 5, drew on local historical fact and follows the commemoration in stone on International Women's Day this year (and plainly visible on the market square) of four Faversham women convicted of witchcraft, three of whom were hanged in 1645. The fate of the fourth is not documented, but was probably similar. Their crime?

Apparently nothing more than refusing to show deference to the town's bullying bigwigs. A sense of injustice still resonates. On a sunny Saturday afternoon, in the intimacy of the Arden Theatre, this ancient evil ever lingering in the walls of the town, made for sober reflection. Fuelled by an indignation which seemed wholly appropriate for a fringe event, the play nevertheless included humorous touches and it made you think about our perception of witches.

We know the ducking stool sink or swim stories, but most of us do not question the fairytale depiction. Repeated beatings and humiliating torture during imprisonment created the gnarled, twisted, deformed stereotype that we now recognise. And these unfairly accused women, resigned to their inevitable deaths, had no choice but to confess to anything, including liaising with the devil. We never hear stories of the woman before the witch. This faithfully-presented and optimistically titled play let fully developed female characters tell this story of senseless and horrific persecution and slot it back into the most miserable of our archives.

Faversham's ancient and quirky history seemed to delight my second chosen act: Colin Etches. How could you



not investigate a name like that? The programme description promised hilarious perspective from a neurodiverse point of view, especially appealing when my chosen companion was my ND daughter.

Colin's flyer shows a musing, soft focus character, while his Instagram footage puts you more in mind - and appropriately it turns out - of Mani in his Stone Roses' heyday. In the flesh, Etches proved a rather benign presence underneath his trademark wild hair, pacing around and swigging from a can of Monster which, the audience could only assume, balanced his ADHD.

On this occasion, he redesigned his show for a cosier feel, more appropriate for the small audience and presented an accessible mix of material: frank anecdotes of drug-fuelled, youthful misdemeanours alongside teasing but generous observations of Faversham, its welcoming feel, wonderful architecture and strangely dog-obsessed population. He laughed at the stalls that sell gourmet dog food - wasted on animals that prefer their own excrement - and I found myself somehow unable to mention the upcoming Howl-O-Ween event, devoted to our adored creatures parading around town in spooky fancy dress. His detailed, unashamed honesty was reassuring and



inviting and we spent a very pleasant hour in something that felt more like convivial conversation.

Talking to Colin after the show I tried to explain the sometimes sleepy nature of this town. The wet Saturday night had emptied all the eateries and pubs looked as if they might shut early. As we spoke, a misplaced and excitable hen party provided the only human presence in the streets and I observed wryly that people round here do not necessarily venture out for comedy. He seemed to understand. He was anxious to praise Ribs Norman, Festival Director, performer and ticket collector on the door that night, for the exhausting task of managing and marketing the festival, irrespective of perhaps a rather niche clientele. He described a past show, Attention Deficit, exploring his life with autism, ADHD and dyspraxia, which had worked superbly well.



I promised him that a local audience interested in more of exactly that material was certainly out there, encouraged him not to judge us too harshly and asked him to come back to Faversham for next year's Fringe.

Back in July I saw Mark Thomas, for the second time, at a packed Alexander Centre, beguilingly sharing some rather outre material with a town that has proved their love for him. In his closing words, he urged the audience to support new comedy in a world where breaking in is becoming increasingly difficult. His words work well with the PS from Ribs Norman: If this is the first you have heard of Faversham Fringe, mark your diaries now for next year every weekend in October :)

By Claudia Heywood



EYE UPDATES



WAR MEMORIAL GARDENS

Faversham Eye sends its condolences to ex councillor Michael Cosgrove and his chimeric War Memorial Garden Committee following their latest set back in trying to get planning permission to move the listed War Memorial Cross from its original position on the corner of what was the Cottage Hospital's Garden on Stone Street into the centre of their Soviet inspired 2019 remodelling of the previous green space. (See Eye 17).

Except for many residents of Priory Road (home to a Mr A Osborne, trustee of The Bensted Charities) who have written in support of the move with eerily similar arguments, despite otherwise overwhelming local opposition, Mr Cosgrove appealed to the national Planning Inspectorate over non determination of his 2023 application.

The inspector Mr N Thomas robustly rejected all of Mr Cosgrove reasons of why the planners at Swale were wrong to have refused permission to move the WW1 stone cross. In particular, he cited Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding historic monuments which briefly states:

"where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent."

Mr Cosgrove and his publicity shy War Memorial Committee should surely now stop wasting public and charity money and accept defeat.

An intriguing question remains as to what to do with remaining funds contributed to this ill-conceived folly.

In 2022 The Bensted Charities (trustee Mr M Cosgrove) who were holding £35,385 on behalf of the War Memorial Fund, transferred this money directly to the seemingly non-existent War Memorial Garden Committee. It would seem reasonable if these funds were now redirected to something much more beneficial such as the Cottage Hospital itself

PAIN IN THE REAR

In future editions of Faversham Eye, it is proposed to initiate discussion about various issues that divide opinion in the Town.

The first topic for discussion is the Faversham Carnival. Is the annual late autumn evening parading of shivering girls dressed in ballgowns with sashes announcing Miss Margate or one of numerous local towns still appropriate in 2024?

Please send any opinions to wish to share to our email address on the back page.



HELEN WHATELY

Will former Trump groupie and democracy lover Helen Whately retrace her steps to Washington for convicted felon Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th President of the United States?

Also, congratulations to Helen for her latest appointment as Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. It is often the case that politicians appointed to ministerial, or shadow ministerial positions know little about the area they are assuming responsibility for, but in this case, Helen's personal experience in extracting near maximum housing allowances for herself (see Eye 11) should help her understand how government benefit payments work.



CLEVE HILL

We have just learnt that the entire electricity output from the massive Cleve Hill Solar Park will be shared between Tesco and Shell oil through a private purchase agreement with both companies. They claim that it is part of the strategy to reduce their carbon footprint and of course hope that it will improve their green credentials with the public.

This obviously leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of residents who not only are now living next to a giant eyesore but also have the small, but real, threat of a future potentially disastrous thermal runaway event in the huge lithium-ion storage batteries.

The whole Cleve Hill project was sold on the basis that the electricity generated would be sufficient to power around 100,000 homes not just to keep the peas frozen in a supermarket. Obviously, it is laudable that Tesco and Shell should seek to go green, but surely only if they fund their own additional low carbon energy generation?



ORDNANCE WHARF (ABOVE)

Coincidentally, just as the referendum for the adoption of the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan takes place, one of the sites designated for development at Ordnance Wharf (see pages 2&3), has come up for sale.

The asking price is a mere £375,000 which many appropriately qualified people may regard as excessive for a site requiring expensive remedial works and with a long history of planning difficulties. Previous planning applications refused or withdrawn in 2003, 2012, 2020 and 2023.



FOR GIFTS THAT DON'T COST THE EARTH

The
Green
Christmas
Market

Faversham Guildhall,
Market Place,
Saturday 7th December 2024
10 am to 4 pm

www.swalefoe.org info@swalefoe.org




NEWS JUST IN

To be reported at length in the next edition of the Faversham Eye...

Swale Green Councillors Lehmann, Gould and Thompson were devastated to be told a few hours before the planning committee meeting on the 7th of November, that the planning decision for the enormous development, Highsted Park, South and East of Sittingbourne had been "called-in" by the government.

Swale planning officers had recommended refusal of the application for nearly ten thousand houses because of the terrible impact it would have on Bapchild, Teynham and the surrounding communities and countryside, but the councillors were given notice shortly before the meeting that the Secretary of State would instead carry out an enquiry.

Councillor Thompson expressed concern that the decision was taken out of local control and an approval could be given for development on prime farmland.

Alistair Gould who is Chair of the council committee developing the new Swale Local Plan due out in 2025 said "what is the point of having a planning committee if we can't even get to discuss the most controversial planning application on our patch which has cross party opposition? If this development is given the green light, it will make a mockery of local planning decision-making and the development of Local Plans."

Rich Lehmann added "this will be a disaster for local communities and infrastructure. What happened to Labour's promise of devolution and more power for local government?"

There have been over 700 objections to this planning application including from the Highways Agency.

The application is from the predacious developers Quinn and Atwood known throughout the county for their opportunistic planning applications.



ALL THE FACTS
Where to find
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Pick up free copies
(while stocks last) at:

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Market Place

Co-op, Forbes Road

Furlongs Preston Street

KGN News Preston Street

McCull's Morrisons Daily
Preston Street

Reeves Taxis

The Hobby Shop
Preston Street

Railway Cutting Barber,
St Mary's Road

Macknade Fine Foods,
Selling Road

Sondes Tea House,
Selling

Fleur de Lis,
Preston Street

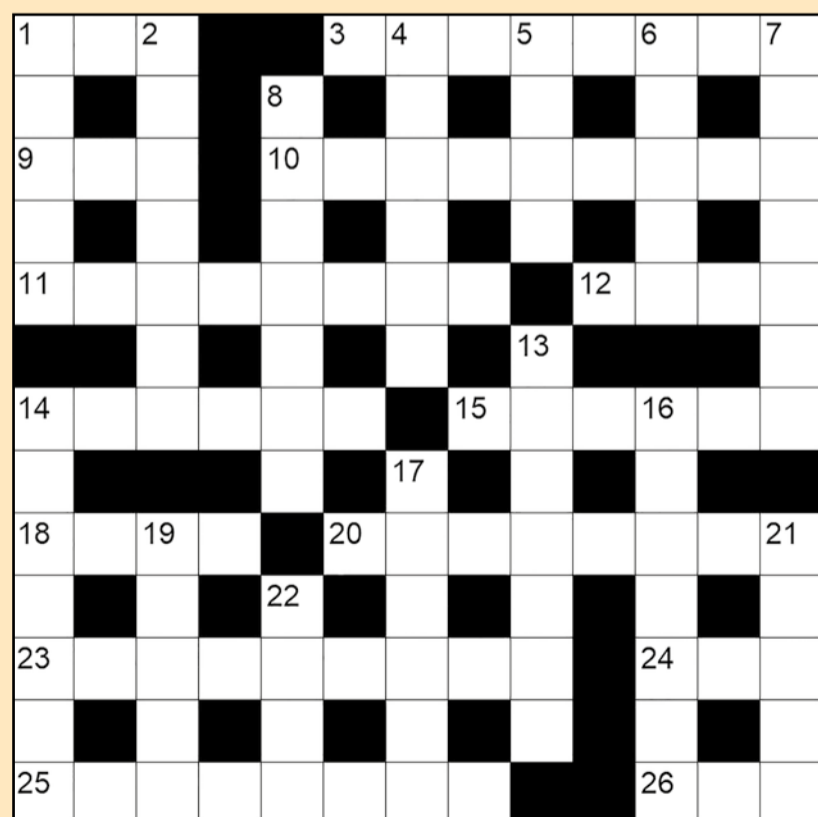


A new Faversham resident



CROSSWORD

COMPILED BY R. GREGORY



ACROSS

- 1&3. Admission of Patricia's is absurd (3,1,4,3)
3. See 1a
9. Got manure without nitrogen (3)
10. Adjustments in pay that leads to bad feeling (9)
11. Stew made with a tin-full of beans (8)
12. Circles round Hawaii flower (4)
14. Broadcast case for safety feature (6)
15. Make fun of bottom with grooves (6)
- 18&24. Received vessel with duck crumble (2,2,3)
20. Commonly, something served with green sticky stuff (8)
23. Subject at home in favour of church supplement (9)
24. See 18
25. Scruffy party dress excited outsiders (3-5)
26. Wild ape is the cause of royal insomnia (3)

DOWN

1. I shortly get help from province raised (5)
2. More marshy gorge is collapsing (7)
4. Expressed cheese hamper (6)
5. I'm anticipating letter from warriors (4)
6. Get one's hands on contract (5)
7. Shortly splurge out on consignment (7)
8. Fruit and nuts (7)
13. Cocktail drink with journalist is connected in a way (7)
14. Cross now. It's about to turn green (7)
16. Music section has registered with old man (7)
17. Intense fire damaged empty cottage (6)
19. Tango banned apparently in town (5)
21. Run over (5)
22. Old king resides up in Stafford (4)

For solution email rinfav@sky.com

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