

# The Story of Faversham Rec



# **The Story of Faversham Rec**

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# Introduction

Faversham Recreation Ground, known affectionately as the Rec, was created in 1860 by the Trustees of Public Charities of Faversham with the enthusiastic support and encouragement of the local community. Much of the original layout remains, including wide, tree-lined avenues, extensive grasslands, mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland, and an attractive lodge built to provide accommodation for the gardener. This 20-acre green space is well used for recreation, is an important venue for sport, and over the years has also hosted a wide range of events and activities.

Research into Faversham Recreation Ground was initiated in 2013 by John Blackford in his study of the building of the new almshouses in Faversham, and by Purcell (Architects, Masterplanners and Heritage Consultants) in a conservation management plan produced in 2018.<sup>1</sup> More recently, community projects undertaken as a contribution to the regeneration of this public space have resulted in the compilation of two booklets: *21 Trees of Faversham Rec* and *Memories of Faversham Rec*.<sup>2</sup>

An exploration of archives, journals and old newspapers has revealed a wealth of additional information that has been used in *The Story of Faversham Rec*. This details the history of the site since the mid nineteenth century and how, for generations, it has been a vital community resource.

### **An anxious wish**

A proposal for a Recreation Ground for Faversham can be traced back to discussions about a generous bequest provided by Henry Wreight, who died in 1840.<sup>3</sup> This was administered by the Trustees of Public Charities of Faversham, who in 1849 arranged a meeting among some of the principal inhabitants of the town to devise plans for the distribution of funds. Suggestions made included the provision of support for almshouses, erection of a soup kitchen and place for the delivery of coals, scholarships for boys belonging to the town of Faversham, the formation and maintenance of a library, a residence for the master of the Free Grammar School, the aid or establishment of schools, and the purchase of a piece of ground for public recreation for the inhabitants of the town.<sup>4</sup>

On the advice of the Charity Commissioners, the Trustees developed a scheme detailing how Henry Wreight's bequest would be allocated to different projects. This scheme, which was submitted to the Court of Chancery and approved in April 1856, did not include the acquisition of land for public recreation, apparently because this was considered impracticable.<sup>5</sup> However, despite this omission, at a quarterly meeting of the Trustees in the summer of the following year, there was renewed discussion about the purchase of land. It was suggested that a meadow described as long in the possession of Mrs Simpson and her family could be acquired, planted and arranged with seats. The Trustees were reported to be highly in favour of the idea, and it was confidently asserted that 'such a proceeding will give the highest satisfaction to all classes.'<sup>6</sup>

Shortly afterwards a special meeting of the Town Council held at the Guildhall passed a resolution that the purchase of Mrs Simpson's meadow would be preferable to the establishment of a public library and reading room, which was one of the projects already approved by the Court of Chancery.<sup>7</sup> This resolution was also supported by a public meeting presided over by the mayor.<sup>8</sup>

In December 1857, the Trustees wrote to the attorney-general, Sir Richard Bethell, to request an alteration of the scheme, to allow them to acquire land instead of providing a library and reading room. They also

explained that a meadow by the town that for centuries had been a favourite resort of the inhabitants was being made ready for disposal in building lots, and that 'an anxious wish was generally expressed that the land should be purchased for the public and dedicated to the purposes of health and recreation.' The Trustees proposed to acquire 8 acres of meadow land and 4¾ acres of arable land adjoining for £4,500, with an additional sum of about £1,500 for laying out, planting and maintenance.<sup>9</sup>

However, when a deputation of Trustees met with Sir Richard Bethell, they must have been dismayed by his response. He refused the application, bluntly stating three reasons for his decision:

The gross capriciousness of the Trustees in seeking so material an alteration of a scheme which had been very recently and solemnly considered and approved.

That the purchase of a piece of land for the purpose of public health and recreation was in his opinion unnecessary for so small a town as Faversham.

That...he never could sanction the purchase of land for such a purpose which was so highly valued as building land.<sup>10</sup>

The Trustees may have gained some comfort from comments that the attorney-general would not insist on the establishment of a library and reading room and under certain circumstances might agree to the purchase of land.<sup>11</sup> Also, although Mrs Simpson's meadow was sold for housing in early 1858, not long afterwards the Trustees received renewed support from a petition submitted by nearly 150 inhabitants. This noted that land near East Street was now for sale and requested the Trustees to again take the subject of a place for public recreation into their consideration.<sup>12</sup>

The Trustees responded by appointing a committee which first examined a location by the Mall, which was rejected because it was too small, and then considered 20 acres described as adjoining the Hernhill Road. The committee recommended that this land should be acquired, subject to the agreement of the attorney-general and the Court of Chancery.<sup>13</sup> In August 1858, the Trustees wrote to Sir Fitzroy Kelly, who had taken over the role of attorney-general, to reiterate the points made in the previous correspondence with Sir

Richard Bethall, and to state that the 20-acre site could be obtained for £4,000 – a large area of land for a low cost.<sup>14</sup> When a deputation of the Trustees, accompanied by William Deedes, Member of Parliament for East Kent, met with Sir Fitzroy Kelly, there was a positive outcome. The purchase of this land using Wreight's bequest was accepted, provided that £500 was raised by the inhabitants.<sup>15</sup>

Subscription lists for donations were opened, and although the author of an article in a local newspaper felt it necessary to express concern about the apathy exhibited by some and to note that 'all those who do not subscribe ought certainly never to put their foot in Faversham Park',<sup>16</sup> the process moved forward swiftly. A public meeting to galvanise support was held in late September 1858,<sup>17</sup> the £500 contribution was raised by November,<sup>18</sup> and by February 1859, *The Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette* was able to make an important announcement:

There is not now, we think, a shadow of a doubt that the project will be carried into execution, and that too at no distant date, so that the inhabitants may now truthfully say, 'We are sure to have a Recreation Ground.'<sup>19</sup>



## Development of the Rec

In August 1859, the Trustees of Public Charities completed the purchase of 20-acres of farmland bounded by the Whitstable Road to the north, the route of the Creek railway line to the east and south and Park Road to the west. Draft plans for laying out the land were produced and featured a lodge, tree-lined avenues and open space for sport and recreation. These plans formed the basis for the final design, though at the last moment it was decided to omit walkways that crossed the central area, as they would have restricted space for cricket.<sup>20</sup>

Development proceeded rapidly. Spoil provided by the East Kent Railway Company was used to create a terrace along the southern fringe.<sup>21</sup> An advertisement was placed seeking tenders for the erection of five-foot-high oak fencing along the northern and western boundaries.<sup>22</sup> Work started on the lodge, which was designed by Kent architect John M. Hooker.<sup>23</sup> William Masters, landscape gardener and proprietor of the Exotic Nursery, Canterbury, was asked to proceed with planting the site.<sup>24</sup> In May 1860, a further contract was awarded, to Samuel Bridgland and William Boorman of Ospringe, for the supply of around 2,000 loads of course gravel, fine gravel and mixed shingle for the walkways.<sup>25</sup>

By early August 1860, it was reported that the Recreation Ground had been completed. A deputation of Trustees met with the mayor, and it was agreed to celebrate the opening with a gala day and general holiday.<sup>26</sup> On Wednesday, 22 August 1860, Faversham Recreation Ground was officially opened, and although the weather was poor, with almost continual drizzle, large numbers attended. Streets were decorated with triumphal arches, banners and flags, and houses ornamented with evergreens and flowers. Shops in the town closed at 1pm, when dignitaries, members of local institutions, together with 1,300 school children gathered in West Street. At 2pm they formed a procession and, led by the Royal Marine Band, were cheered along the route to the Rec, where crowds gathered at the terrace in front of the lodge. Here the mayor and chairman of the Trustees took centre stage, and with speeches and shouting of three cheers, the site was declared open.

As a contribution to the proceedings, ladies of Faversham provided a large flag, 15 feet by 11 feet, bearing the arms of the borough, with three golden lions on a red background. This was raised on a flagpole situated in front of the lodge and, to a burst of cheering, unfurled.

Later in the afternoon there were sports and games and a presentation of musical instruments to the 2nd Kent Volunteer Artillery Corps, again by ladies of Faversham. The finale was a gathering in a marquee of about 80 gentlemen who celebrated the success of the project with a meal interspersed with speeches, toasts and music by the Royal Marine Band.<sup>27</sup>

In the following years the Trustees of Public Charities focused on other projects and did not further develop the Recreation Ground. However, in common with many other public spaces, during the Victorian era the site was embellished with an assortment of ornaments gifted by individuals: a weathervane, sundial, drinking fountain and an ornate cast iron bandstand.<sup>28</sup>



## Management of the Rec

The Trustees of Public Charities were responsible for management of this new public space, and a few months before the opening ceremony they advertised for a 'gardener and keeper of the Recreation Ground', stipulating that applicants had to be married and reside at the lodge. Henry Percival was appointed and received a salary of 16 shillings per week.<sup>29</sup> The Rec would have been a large area for one person to care for, though the central area of grass, slightly over 13 acres in extent, would not have required mowing as for many years it was fenced and leased for grazing. The lease stipulated that the public had to be permitted access, only sheep could be grazed, and the livestock penned or removed when the land was required for sport or other activities.<sup>30</sup>

When rules and regulations were drafted for Faversham Recreation Ground in 1861, it was noted that the Trustees would 'rely more on the good sense and feelings of the public to assist them in maintaining order than on any penalty they can inflict'.<sup>31</sup> However, despite this appeal for good sense, the Trustees soon felt it necessary to request a policeman to attend the site once or twice every evening, and in September 1863 more supervision was sought, though this was refused as extra visits would have deprived other areas of a police presence.<sup>32</sup> A solution was found when Henry Percival left and his successor, William Creed, took up post. In addition to having the role of gardener and keeper, Mr Creed was asked to act as a police constable for that part of the Recreation Ground situated within the borough.<sup>33</sup> In the following years his name appeared in a succession of newspaper reports which detailed how adults and, on occasions, children had been apprehended and brought before the authorities for breaking branches, damaging shrubs, picking flowers or other minor offences. Some perpetrators received a caution, though others were fined and threatened with prison or hard labour if in default.<sup>34</sup>

William Creed was succeeded in 1873 by James Barnard, and a few years later it was noted that the gardener had two assistants who also looked after the grounds of the almshouses and grammar school.<sup>35</sup> In 1885, Mr Barnard met with the Trustees regarding disorder, depredations and damage at the Recreation Ground, and it was decided to separate the roles of gardener and constable.<sup>36</sup> For the latter position

the Trustees advertised for 'a strong able-bodied man, of good character, of the height of 5ft. 8in. at least, as keeper of the Recreation Ground, to act there as Special Constable.' Henry Spillett, aged 25, a former private in the 10th Royal Regiment of Hussars, was appointed and received £1 2s 6d per week. He was provided with a suit of clothes, including a hat with a gold band, and was required to live in the neighbourhood of the Rec, to be in attendance during the hours the gates were open, and to ensure that park regulations were observed.<sup>37</sup>

The budget for managing the Rec was initially set at £82 10s per annum, plus rent received for grazing the 13 acres of grassland. This was subsequently raised to £110 per annum plus grazing income. Despite the increase, in 1897 the Trustees reported that the account had been in debt for several years, and it was agreed to request Faversham Town Council to take over management. This decision was taken reluctantly, though it was noted that the alternative would be the drastic step of raising capital by selling the frontage along Whitstable Road.<sup>38</sup>

The Town Council agreed to manage the Rec from July 1898<sup>39</sup> and soon organised a programme of works to enhance the grounds, including introducing gas lighting, surfacing the walkways with asphalt, and replacing the oak fencing along Whitstable Road and Park Road with metal railings and gates.<sup>40</sup> Byelaws were also developed to govern activities in the Recreation Ground, replacing rules and regulations devised by the Trustees.<sup>41</sup>

The council continued the practice of employing both a gardener who maintained the site and resided in the lodge, and a park constable. Staff included Mr Sam Studd, who was constable at the Rec for 20 years until he retired in 1943 and is recalled by Faversham residents as having been a rule stickler, chasing children who were riding bikes or playing in the shrubberies.<sup>42</sup> Constables continued to be employed at the Rec as recently as the 1960s, though eventually the role disappeared. It is not known why this happened, though brief newspaper articles indicate that by this time the council was having difficulty in finding suitable candidates for the post, and that park users were becoming less accepting of the constable's authority and the enforcement of rules which could seem arbitrary and unnecessary.<sup>43</sup>

Management responsibility for the Rec was eventually transferred from Faversham Council to Swale Borough Council, probably in the mid-1970s. New working practices were developed for parks, with mobile squads that covered several sites, and there was no longer a gardener based at the Rec or any need to provide accommodation for parks staff at the lodge. For a while the lodge was used as a temporary residence for newly appointed Swale personnel, and since 1994 Faversham Rugby Club has leased the building as a club house.<sup>44</sup>

### Entertainment, Activities and Sport

For Victorians, the ideal accompaniment for a visit to a park was the stirring sound of a band, and when, in the summer of 1859, plans for the Recreation Ground were being publicly discussed, this stimulated interest in the formation of a Faversham town band. Soon a group described as 'respectable young artisans' was meeting for practice twice a week and their first major booking was scheduled for May 1861, when they were to play in the Rec at a party for local children celebrating Queen Victoria's birthday. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled as the band was refused entry by the gardener, who had been instructed that performances were only permitted if a special order had first been obtained from the Trustees. Following this setback new procedures were quickly introduced, and music, often provided by military bands on summer evenings, became a regular attraction at the Rec.<sup>45</sup>

A second unfortunate incident occurred shortly afterwards, on 1 July 1861. This was the brickmaker's holiday, and a local newspaper described the events which unfolded when labourers and brickmakers employed in several brickfields decided to organise a running match at the Rec:

If matters had rested thus, no one would have been more gratified than ourselves at hearing that such a hard-working body of men as the brick-makers had had an opportunity of enjoying themselves in rational amusement. For the disturbance which followed we have to thank the trustees, for to them we think the blame must be attached. We are told that a publican, who figured at the police court on the next day but one, had the indiscriminate use of the ground to vend his liquors. Beer and spirits, the enemies of the working man, soon did their work, fighting commenced, and a scene ensued which beggars all description.<sup>46</sup>

In response, a petition was drawn up to request that the Trustees, as guardians of the site, 'put a stop to such exhibitions'. Shortly afterwards a notice was issued forbidding the taking of intoxicating liquors at the Recreation Ground.<sup>47</sup>

Despite these initial problems, the Rec became a popular and successful venue for a wide range of events, some of which must have been particularly memorable, such as the ceremony to mark the marriage of the

Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra of Denmark in March 1863. Upwards of 5,000 people gathered by the lodge, and in addition to speeches, installing a sundial and planting a memorial oak, the festivities included artillery volunteers performing a *feu de joie* (rifles fired in rapid succession, making a loud rat-tat-tat sound), and a train running over and detonating 21 fog signals placed on the nearby railway tracks to imitate a 21-gun salute.<sup>48</sup>

Local newspapers from the Victorian period mention youngsters at the Rec taking part in informal activities including running, dancing, skipping and playing kiss-in-the-ring and drop-handkerchief. For adults, the wide, tree-lined walkways around the perimeter of the site provided the perfect venue for promenading: taking a leisurely walk, ride or drive to meet friends and to see and be seen by others. A report of a meeting of the Trustees in July 1869 also provides an insight into another way adults were entertaining themselves on the walkways, stating that 'the use of velocipedes [an early form of bicycle] be disallowed in the Recreation Ground, as being somewhat dangerous.'<sup>49</sup>

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, goal running matches were played at the Rec. Goal running involved two teams, often in bare feet, and was based on 'tag', but with additional rules.<sup>50</sup> However, despite attempts to revive the game, it eventually died out, maybe in part because new sports were gaining prominence. For example, by the late 1880s there were reports of teams at the Recreation Ground playing under rugby rules, an account of a match between Faversham and Thanet Wanderers mentioning tries, place kicks and grounding the leather behind the posts.<sup>51</sup>

Celebrations of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee included festivities at the Rec. The Golden Jubilee of 1887 was particularly well supported, attracting 3,000 to 4,000 adults and 2,000 children who witnessed athletic sports on a course which had been roped off and steam-rolled for the occasion.<sup>52</sup>

The annual Faversham Carnival, an illuminated procession with decorated vehicles and costumed participants, was first organised in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and on occasions has included events at the Recreation Ground, including an evening firework display held in November 1893. Thousands marvelled at Roman candles, rockets, an ascent of a magnesium balloon, a terrace of silver fountains,

gold-dust screen, mammoth jewelled tree, silver girandole and prismatic cascade. The finale was a representation of Guy Fawkes in the act of igniting a train of gunpowder.<sup>53</sup>

During the First World War the extensive grasslands were used for an encampment of the West Lancs Royal Field Artillery in 1914, a recruitment meeting in 1915, and peace celebrations in July 1919 that featured the mayor reading the King's message to his people, and a choir of 1,500 children singing the national anthem and patriotic songs.<sup>54</sup> A few days after the peace celebrations, the Rec was the focus for an extraordinary event organised by the National War Savings Committee, which presented tank number 258 to Faversham in recognition of funds raised during the war. Accompanied by a band and members of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers, it left the railway depot and clanked along Station Road, Newton Road and East Street to the northwestern corner of the Rec where it maneuvered onto a concrete strip, the engine stopped, and dignitaries climbed onto 258 to deliver stirring speeches. Later that day the tank officer presented the mayor with the magneto, presumably to ensure that no one could try to start the engine and take it for a drive. The parked tank was subsequently joined by another war relic, a heavy German gun, though in 1937 both were sold by the council for scrap.<sup>55</sup>

A bowling green with six rinks, a hut for players and a raised bank for spectators opened in 1921, created by unemployed people working under the direction of the borough supervisor. The charge was initially two pennies per person for an hour, with an additional penny for the use of bowls and India-rubber shoes. Spectators were allowed in the enclosure for two pennies on ordinary days, four on match days.<sup>56</sup>

In the late 1930s there was a craze for roller skating at the Rec, and, like the riding of velocipedes seventy years earlier, what was enjoyed by some was perceived as a problem by others. Amongst other complaints, it was said that the walkways were hardly safe for pedestrians and that the noise for residents in Park Road was 'almost unbearable'! Faversham Council responded to these concerns with a new byelaw: 'A person shall not in the pleasure ground use a skate mounted on wheels or rollers to the danger of any other person properly using the pleasure ground.'<sup>57</sup>

In the prelude of the Second World War, there was a recruitment meeting at the Rec and trenches were dug to provide shelter from air raids. Although the trenches were infilled shortly afterwards, residents recall

that concrete shelters were subsequently built by Park Road and by Whitstable Road. During the war a demonstration allotment was created by the gardener in support of the Dig for Victory campaign and, surprisingly, at the height of the conflict in 1943, the Civil Defence Service helped organise a sports day and 'Holiday at Home' at the Rec. The latter featured pony and donkey rides, treasure hunt, putting green, clock golf, hoop-la, darts, bean bags, penny on the square, roulette table and 'bowling for a chicken'.<sup>58</sup>

In the post-war period, two important heritage features were unfortunately lost. The elegant Victorian statue of a young woman in the act of emptying an amphora that surmounted the drinking fountain was damaged and removed in 1950.<sup>59</sup> The second and even more tragic loss was the removal of the ornate bandstand which stood in front of the lodge. Following a decision in 1951 to defer repainting, inexplicably three years later the council invited tenders for dismantling the structure. The bandstand had not only been a venue for music, but is said to have served as a pulpit for religious services and a cricket pavilion. In its early days it was lit by gas, and the flickering flames must have provided a wonderful setting for evening performances.<sup>60</sup>

An opportunity to add a splash of colour at the Rec was provided by the coronation of 1953, when the gardener Mr W. J. Kemp and parks superintendent Mr W. G. Abel laid out a large bed in the shape of a clover leaf in the lawns near the lodge. This was planted with around 2,500 flowers raised by parks staff and included a crown of golden foliage.<sup>61</sup>

As the austerity and rationing that followed the war faded away, new events started to be organised: Forrest's Funfair is believed to have called to the Rec every year since the late 1940s, and spectacular Whit Monday celebrations became major attractions in the mid to late 1950s. The first Whit Monday event in 1954 was advertised as 'Britain's Biggest Barbecue' and organised by food service staff attached to the United States Air Force at Manston in Thanet. The team worked over the weekend to burn green oak, making charcoal which was used in a barbecue pit to cook 14 pigs and 300 chickens. A huge crowd of around 30,000 arrived and, in addition to the food, there was community singing, American square dancing, displays, side shows, sports and a children's fancy dress competition.<sup>62</sup>

The American caterers attended again in 1955 when, unbelievably, they organised an even larger barbecue.<sup>63</sup> Throughout the rest of the decade a Whit Monday celebration with food, sports and



entertainment, promoted as Faversham Gala Day, was held at the Rec. In some years special guests were invited: Princess Andrew of Russia opened the proceedings in 1956, and Jo Douglas and Pete Murray, presenters of the popular TV music show *6-5 Special*, were in attendance in 1958.<sup>64</sup> However, in the years that followed, the Gala Days focused on cycle racing and athletics, and the feasting came to an end.

In the early 1960s, the Town Council developed plans to improve sports facilities at the Rec. A new pavilion close to the William Street entrance opened in 1964, tennis courts were erected, and for a while there was a paddling pool and a putting green. Also, around this period an old timber pavilion situated towards the northern end of Park Road and the wartime air raid shelters were demolished.

These developments were welcomed, though concerns were expressed when a car park was constructed in the Rec by the pavilion. Another contentious issue in the 1960s was the removal of shrubberies along the western fringe of the Rec. Clearance followed a petition signed by Park Road residents who argued that the plants were an eyesore, littered with rubbish. They also complained that the foliage was used as cover by children for such activities as doorbell ringing and door knocking!<sup>65</sup>

Another change has been the disappearance of cricket, which was last played at the Recreation Ground around the late 1960s. Rugby has however thrived, the three football pitches continue to be in high demand, and both the bowling club and tennis club have benefited from new pavilions. Opportunities for recreation have also been enhanced with the construction of a skateboard park, multi-use games area (MUGA) and outdoor gym. In 2021, a junior parkrun was initiated at the Rec and is now a popular weekly event.

### **Renewing the Rec**

Faversham Recreation Ground has been a focal point for community life for over 150 years. It is also an important heritage site, retaining much of its original Victorian layout and character, forming part of the Faversham Conservation Area and making a significant contribution to the urban landscape. The lodge, which is of unusual design, combining accommodation with sheltered public space in verandas (loggias), has received Grade II listing, as has an old, inscribed boundary stone situated by the path from the playground to the footbridge over the railway.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the Rec is an important wildlife area that links with grassland and woodland along adjacent railway lines and with wetland at Cooksditch stream, which flows to the rear of houses along the western side of Cyprus Road.

In 2010, Swale Borough Council signed a new lease with the Trustees of Public Charities, confirming the continued management of the Recreation Ground as public open space,<sup>67</sup> and in 2016 the council applied for support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a wide range of improvements. Following consultation with residents and stakeholders, fully costed plans were submitted, and in July 2018 an award was made through the Parks for People programme for a major regeneration scheme.

The regeneration of the Rec has involved refurbishing the lodge and pavilion, improving paths, restoring wrought iron gates and erecting metal railings alongside Whitstable Road and Park Road. Improvements have been made to both the play area and skateboard park, and there is now a catering kiosk and outdoor events space at the lodge. Natural heritage projects include tree planting along the avenues, a woodland walk with natural seating alongside Park Road, rewilding the woodlands, erecting bird and bat boxes and planting wildflowers to attract bees and other pollinators. Local biodiversity has also been promoted in two timber sculptures by Kent sculptor Les Langley, one carved with bees, the other with squirrels.

A five-year action plan of community engagement is being implemented by an activity coordinator and ranger. This commenced in 2019, with the setting up of the Friends of the Rec group, a dedicated Facebook page, publication of a regular newsletter, development of volunteering opportunities and a programme of projects and events.

### **Help us discover more about the Rec**

Swale Borough Council is keen to continue to explore the history and heritage of Faversham Recreation Ground. There is still much to discover. For example, was accommodation at the lodge a great perk for the gardener, or did living on site make it impossible to get away from work? Was the job of constable of the Rec an unusual arrangement, or were park constables common in the UK, and if so, why did the role disappear? Was the former practice of sheep grazing at the Rec a cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution for urban grassland management, or a constant headache because of issues such as dog worrying and vandalism of fences?

Further research in archives and searches of old minute books of council meetings might help provide answers to these and other questions. However, the best sources of information are most likely to be found in the memories, scrap books and photograph albums of residents. We would love to hear from anyone who can recall the Rec in times gone by, or who has documents or images that could be copied. If you can help, please get in touch with the activity coordinator or ranger - contact details are given on the final page.

## References and Notes

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4. The meeting of 1849 is described in - “Wright’s charities.” *Kentish Gazette*, 27 February 1849, p. 3. The meeting appears to have been called because the Trustees found the distribution of funds to be fraught with difficulties, see - “Editorial” *Faversham Gazette and Whitstable, Sittingbourne and Milton Journal*, 30 May 1857, p. 4; Blackford, J. *The building of the new almshouses in Faversham 1860 – 1863*. Faversham: Faversham Municipal Charities, 2013. p. 4.
5. For a summary of the scheme see - “Wright’s Charity.” *Kentish Gazette*, 14 March 1854, p. 3; Attorney General V Hilton: Henry Wright’s charity. Faversham, Kent. Scheme for administration. 1856-1858. National Archives, Kew. TS 18/1256. pp. 3-6. See also Blackford, J. *The building of the new almshouses in Faversham 1860 – 1863*. Faversham: Faversham Municipal Charities, 2013. pp. 6-8. The reasons why land for public recreation was omitted from the scheme is alluded to in - “Public Recreation Ground.” *Faversham Gazette and Whitstable, Sittingbourne and Milton Journal*, 15 August 1857, p. 4.
6. “Charity Trustees’ Quarterly Meeting.” *Faversham Gazette and Whitstable, Sittingbourne and Milton Journal*, 18 July 1857, p. 4; John Blackford provides a note about Mrs Elizabeth Simpson and

Simpson's Meadow, which he describes as having extended from what is now the Recreation Ground to as far as the east side of Preston Street. See Blackford, J. *The building of the new almshouses in Faversham 1860 – 1863*. Faversham: Faversham Municipal Charities, 2013 p. 8.

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20. The date of the completion of the purchase of the site is given in - "Public Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 20 August 1859, p. 4. Plans of the Rec see - Design for laying out and planting the proposed site of the exercise and recreation ground at Faversham, January 1859. Signed William Masters and Sons Landscape Gardeners Canterbury and Maidstone, John M Hooker Architect, January 1959. (plan B). Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/T2/26; Design for the laying-out and planting. The proposed site of the exercise and recreation ground at Faversham. 1859. (plan E). Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/T2/27; See also Plan of Faversham Recreation Ground. Signed Benjamin Adkins, 1866. Map held by Faversham Municipal Charities. The planned layout is referred to in - "Recreation Ground." *East Kent Gazette*, 28 May 1859, p. 4. The decision not to create walkways across the central part of the recreation ground is mentioned in - "The Recreation Ground." *Maidstone and Kentish Journal*, 28 July 1860, p. 2; "The Recreation Ground." *Maidstone and Kentish Journal*, 30 October 1860, p. 2.
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25. Samuel Bridgland and William Boorman and the Trustees of the Charities of the Borough of Faversham. Contract for supplying and depositing on the Recreation Ground materials for the formation of walks, 3 May 1860. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/T/2/37; "Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 5 May 1860, p. 4.
26. "The Recreation Ground." *Maidstone and Kentish Journal*, 14 August 1860, p. 2.
27. "Opening of the Recreation Grounds." *Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmer's Gazette*, 25 August 1860, p. 3; "Opening of the Faversham Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 25 August 1860, p. 3; "Opening of the Recreation Ground." *Maidstone and Kentish Journal*, 28 August 1860, p. 2; "Our New Recreation Ground." *Kentish Gazette*, 28 August 1860, pp. 5, 6; "Opening of the Recreation Ground." *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, 28 August 1860, p. 2. For information about the flag see – "Town Flag." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 18 August 1860, p. 4; Bills for flag staff and flag for recreation ground 1860. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/T/2/41.
28. Weathervane - This was made by A. Hawkins, whitesmith of Preston Street. "The Recreation Ground." *Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette*, 8 November 1862, p. 3; As part of the restoration of the lodge, in February 2021 a replacement based on the original design was created by Chris Keay of K-Works Blacksmithing, Langley, Maidstone, and erected on the roof of the building.



Sundial - The pedestal was designed by Hooker and Wheeler, the sundial made by Negretti & Zambra. Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting 15 April 1863. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A/1/2 (1856-1870); "Celebration of the royal marriage." *East Kent Gazette*, 14 March 1863, p. 4; "Rec sundial became a birdbath." *Faversham News*, 4 April 2013, p. 28. Drinking fountain - This was donated by Rev G. J. Hilton. "Proposed Drinking Fountain for the Recreation Ground." *East Kent Gazette*, 26 July 1884, p. 5; "A Drinking Fountain for the Recreation Ground." *East Kent Journal*, 12 May 1888, p. 6; "The fountain in the recreation ground." *Faversham News and East Kent Journal*, 21 July 1888, p. 5; See also reference 59. Bandstand – "Death of a well-known tradesman." *East Kent Gazette*, 15 March 1919, p. 6; See also reference 60.

29. "To gardeners." *East Kent Gazette*, 14 April 1860, p. 1; Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 30 September 1863. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/2 (1856-1870)
30. Trustees of Faversham Charities to John Harris Curling, butcher, of Faversham. 30 November 1861. Of the pasturage of 13 acres 3 roods and 11.75 perches of land in the recreation ground of the parishes of Faversham and Preston next Faversham for 14 years. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/T1/25.
31. Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 21 August 1861. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/2 (1856-1870).
32. Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 30 September 1863. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/2 (1856-1870).
33. "The Recreation Ground." *Kentish Gazette*, 17 November 1863, p. 6; "Faversham Borough Police." *East Kent Gazette*, 20 February 1864, p. 4; Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 12 November 1863, 20 April 1864, Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/2 (1856-1870).

34. "Borough Police Court." *Kentish Gazette*, 7 June 1864, p. 6; "Caution to youths who go to the recreation ground." *East Kent Gazette*, 23 March 1867, p. 5; "Faversham Borough Petty Sessions." *East Kent Gazette*, 4 June 1870, p. 5; "Wilful Damage at the Recreation Ground." *East Kent Gazette*, 8 October 1870, p. 5. See also "A Caution to Boys." *East Kent Gazette*, 5 June 1875, p. 5.
35. "To Gardeners." *Kentish Gazette* 15 April 1873, p. 1; "Sittingbourne and Milton." *East Kent Gazette*, 27 September 1879, p. 5.
36. Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 25 June 1885. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/10 (1881-1895).
37. "The Faversham United Municipal Charities. Recreation Ground Branch. Notice." *East Kent Gazette*, 27 June 1885, p. 4; "The Recreation Ground." *East Kent Gazette*, 4 July 1885, p. 5; Faversham Municipal Charities. Minute Books. Meeting of 2 July 1885. Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone, CAN-U424/A1/10 (1881-1895). Confusingly, both the gardener and constable were at times referred to as 'keeper'.
38. "Trustees of Public Charities." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 10 April 1897, p. 5; "Faversham Town Council." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 22 May 1897, p. 5.
39. "Trustees of Public Charities." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 18 June 1898, p. 5.
40. "Recreation Ground." *Faversham News*, 19 April 1902, p. 10; "Recreation ground fence." *Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmer's Gazette*, 6 February 1909, p. 5.
41. Byelaws for the recreation ground were first made by the council in 1899. See - Anon, *Pleasure ground byelaws*. Faversham: Elvy Bros. 1940. Paragraph 26. A copy of this booklet is held at the offices of the Trustees of Faversham Municipal Charities.
42. "Town Employees Retire." *Faversham News*, 9 April 1943, p. 5; Simon, B. *Memories of Faversham Rec*. Sittingbourne: Swale Borough Council, 2022.

43. "Park constable to be appointed." *Faversham News*, 7 April 1961, p. 4; "Council to try again for Rec. constable." *Faversham News*, 22 June 1962, p. 1; "The park constable and by-laws." *Faversham News*, 13 September 1963, p. 1; "When the park constable said 'Now the cricket has to stop.'" *Faversham News*, 26 July 1963, p. 1.
44. Information kindly provided by Graeme Tuff, Greenspaces Manager, Swale Borough Council, in 2022; In an examination of old newspapers the earliest reference found to Swale Borough Council involvement in the Rec concerns the supply of poles for tree planting project in 1978. See – "Trees planted at Recreation Ground." *Faversham News*, 17 March 1978, p. 8.
45. "A band for Faversham." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 27 August 1859, p. 4; "The Faversham Band." *Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness Gazette*, 21 January 1860, p. 4; "Faversham Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheerness and East Kent Gazette*, 1 June 1861, p. 4; "The Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheerness and East Kent Gazette*, 15 June 1861, p. 4; "The Town Band." *Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheerness and East Kent Gazette*, 22 June 1861, p. 4.
46. "The Recreation Ground." *Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheerness and East Kent Gazette*, 6 July 1861, p. 4.
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49. "The Trustees of Public Charities." *East Kent Gazette*, 24 July 1869, p.4.

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52. "The Victorian Jubilee." *Faversham News and East Kent Journal*, 25 June 1887, p. 5; "The Diamond Jubilee: Celebrations at Faversham." *Faversham Mercury*, 26 June 1897, p. 5.
53. "Faversham. Illuminated procession of the carnival club." *Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette*, 18 November 1893, p. 5.
54. The Faversham Society has two photographs of a military encampment, one inscribed WT LANCS R. F. A. IN FAVERSHAM RECREATION GROUND NOV 1914; "Faversham." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 9 October 1915, p. 1; "Celebrating the Peace." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 26 July 1919, p. 4.
55. "Faversham tank presented." *Faversham and North East Kent News*, 2 August 1919, p. 3; "Faversham Town Council." *Faversham and North East Kent News*, 6 December 1919, p. 3; "Faversham Town Council." *Faversham and North East Kent News*, 30 October 1937, p. 2; "Faversham's old war tank." *Faversham and Northeast Kent News*, 19 February 1938, p. 4. Although the council sold the tank and gun for scrap in 1937, it is not known when they were removed. Interestingly, several Faversham residents independently questioned thought that the tank remained at the Rec until the 1940s or possibly the early 1950s.

56. "Bowling Green Opened." *East Kent Gazette*, 13 August 1921, p. 8; "Opening by the mayor." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 20 August 1921, p. 3.
57. "Roller skating nuisance." *Faversham Times and Mercury and North-East Kent Journal*, 22 July 1939, p. 4; "Roller skating in the Recreation Ground." *Faversham Times and Mercury and North-East Kent Journal*, 21 October 1939, p. 1; Anon, *Pleasure ground byelaws*. Faversham: Elvy Bros. 1940. Paragraph 23. A copy of this booklet is held at the offices of the Trustees of Faversham Municipal Charities.
58. "Air Raid Trenches." *Faversham Times and Mercury and North-East Kent Journal*, 28 January 1939, p. 1; "The trenches." *Faversham Times and Mercury and North-East Kent Journal*, 11 February 1939, p. 5; "Join the Territorial Army – Now!" *Faversham Times and Mercury and North-East Kent Journal*, 6 May 1939, p. 1; "Demonstration allotment." *Faversham News* 13 March 1942, p. 1; "Faversham civil defence sports day" *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 1 May 1943, p. 2; "Faversham's Holiday-At-Home." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 7 August 1943, p. 2.
59. "Vandalism in Rec." *Faversham News and East Kent Journal*, 10 March 1950, p. 1; "Object of vandalism." *Faversham News and East Kent Journal*, 17 March 1950, p. 1.
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64. "Large crowds enjoyed Bank Holiday barbecue." *East Kent Gazette*, 25 May 1956, p. 3; "10,000 at gala and barbecue." *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 26 May 1956, p. 4; "Thousands attend Faversham gala day." *East Kent Gazette*, 14 June 1957, p. 4; "6.5 Special ran up record profit at Faversham Gala." *East Kent Gazette*, 30 May 1958, p. 5.
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66. Prior, A. and Harley, B. *Faversham Recreation Ground: Conservation Management Plan prepared for Swale Borough Council*. Project Reference Number PP-15-05083. London: Purcell, 2018.
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For more information about Faversham Rec see:

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