

FAVERSHAM EYE ELECTION SPECIAL

Welcome to our Faversham Eye Election Special. We are preparing a full Christmas issue to come out on Saturday, December 21 but when the snap General Election was called, we decided to print an extra, one-off eight-page edition.

And what a strange election it is. The stakes are through the roof and political skulduggery is off the leash. Deciding how to vote effectively was difficult enough back when we only had one general election every five years and being caught fibbing was considered a vote-loser. Nowadays it's becoming impossible to know what information we can trust or judge where news ends and propaganda begins.

This is the third general election in three years and probably the most important of our lifetimes and we have been bombarded by deception, distortion and disinformation without precedent. It feels more like psychological warfare than election campaigning. Facebook, Twitter, the BBC, Conservative HQ and all manner of shady social media propaganda outlets have targeted us

with a mindbending barrage of fake news, fake videos, fake statistics, fake websites and fake manifestos.

Our unelected Prime Minister is a serial liar who has deployed every dirty trick in the book to retain power and borrowed a disturbing arsenal of new ones from his Russian friends. This lie-spaffing integrity vacuum has already dragged the country down Donald Trump's reality-free rabbit hole, where anything goes and concepts like truth, facts and fairness cease to matter.

These organised attempts to legitimise barefaced lying are corrosive and anti-democratic. They go against everything *The Faversham Eye* – and all genuine journalism – stands for and cannot be allowed to succeed.

The outcome of this election will have enormous impact locally. Will devastating Government cuts to Kent and Swale council budgets deepen or be reversed? Will Faversham's GP waiting lists get even longer? Will we even have an NHS any more? Will Kent's struggling farmers be pushed under by Brexit? Will our

schools get the funding they badly need? Will even more children in our community grow up on the breadline? It's up to us. We decide, on 12 December.

To help us all make an informed choice, we requested interviews with all the main candidates contesting the Faversham and Mid Kent seat: Labour's Jenny Reeves, the Greens' Hannah Temple, Lib Dem Hannah Perkin and, our current MP, Conservative Helen Whately. With the exception of Helen Whately who agreed to answer emailed questions but changed her mind after receiving them, they were happy to argue their cases.

We also look at tactical voting and which candidate stands the best chance of giving the town a new MP, explaining who gets the *Faversham Eye*'s vote and why. And we report on how the different parties have campaigned locally and what they've said and done to win or lose our support.

Enjoy the issue. We hope you find it helpful and informative. Please vote on Dec 12 and make sure Faversham's voice is heard.



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HELEN WHATLEY CONSERVATIVES



Conservatives

Helen Whatley succeeded Hugh Robertson as MP for Faversham and Mid Kent in 2015.

The one thing you can say is that she is loyal to her party, regardless of how its policies affect her constituents. When Cameron was in charge, she was a devout follower and a Remainer. Her best ever piece of writing is a passionate tweet, “Why I’m voting to stay in the EU” uploaded in May 2016. Post-referendum, when Theresa May twitched her way into power, Helen became a passionate Brexiteer, namechecking her glorious leader and party twice as often as Faversham or her constituents on Twitter.

Now Boris Johnson is Tory top dog, she is his biggest fan, calling him “an ardent feminist” (a view not shared by any of his lovers who know him as a man who comes and goes, without cleaning up after himself). She has not commented on his recently publicised comment that is “feeble” for a man to be unable to “take control of his woman.”

The 43-year-old’s image is a sweet, hardworking mum balancing the cares of motherhood with her duty as a fierce representative of the people of Faversham. But her voting record tells a very different story:

a potentially good politician fallen into bad company. Since becoming an MP and the Conservatives’ Deputy Chair, she has emerged as a cheerleader for the worst extremes of the “nasty party”. She consistently votes for measures which punish the poor, the weak and the disabled while protecting tax dodgers and the mega rich.

In particular, she has voted to reduce welfare spending and benefit cuts for those in supported housing, taking away from the poor what little they have. At the same time, she used her vote to block attempts to stop the wealthy avoid tax by hiding their money in offshore trusts. She has also opposed measures to force big multinationals (Amazon, Apple, Facebook and many others) to pay their fair share of tax. She voted against higher taxes on banks and for reductions in capital gains tax, which helps people who already own assets, but does nothing for everyone else.

Currently, one in four children in Faversham lives in poverty. Meanwhile, Helen just moved into a Grade II listed £1.35 million farmhouse in Leaveland. The house is 4,500 square feet, with seven bedrooms (five with en suite bathrooms), swimming pool, nearly seven acres of land and

substantial outhouses and stables. Paying for it was clearly not a problem.

Her general voting record is all in the same, hard-right vein. She has voted against policies to reduce climate change and for increased NHS privatisation (despite claiming the new Kent NHS Medical School as one of her successes). She supported government mass snooping on everyone’s phones and emails. She also voted for yet more restrictions on trades unions. Back in her 2016 Remainer days, she urged ever close relationships with Europe. Since then, she has voted against the right of EU nationals already living in the UK to stay and for stronger policies on immigration and asylum.

She never opposes government policy, even when it is not in the best interests of her constituents. Faversham recently lost its Crown Post Office and the impact will be felt soon, as the company who got the franchise has already gutted Sittingbourne and closed Sheppey post offices. Helen has been silent on this issue. She opposed giving local councils greater control of local issues like housing, a crucial issue for Faversham as our town is now swamped with new estates.

Helen has shown herself happy to sing for her supper. She has

enjoyed paid-for visits to Turkey, Bahrain and in April 2017 to Saudi Arabia. She did not declare the exact cost of this trip, the only entry on the register is an estimate: £3,717. The following year she defended the Saudis saying they “are taking steps to improve their actions on human rights”. Since then, Saudi Arabia has launched a genocidal war against Yemen, now the greatest humanitarian disaster on the planet.

When Jeremy Corbyn condemned the Saudis for this, she described him as “poorly informed”. She has not spoken publicly about the recent murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, hacked to death by the Saudis in their Turkish embassy or persistent human rights abuses in Bahrain and Turkey.

Over the last few years she has relentlessly promoted Leeds Castle. The grateful charity then treated her and her millionaire husband to a slap up night out (£295 for accommodation) and dinner (£258). She was recently appointed Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism. In one of her first interviews, she promoted Leeds Castle, without mentioning the joys of a free night out, but then that is not something available to just anyone.

So far, in this election she has given some car crash TV interviews, being fact checked the first time live on air and found to be exaggerating. She has made bogus claims about Tory Party achievements, the most fatuous being “more police officers” when the truth is that there are 20,000 fewer officers now than when the Tories came to power in 2010.

ELECTION PROMISES

- ‘Get Brexit Done’
- Better public services with more money for the NHS hospitals and GPs and more police officers
- Better schools and colleges, new apprenticeships and tax cuts for businesses
- Investment in roads
- Superfast broadband for more homes
- Protecting the countryside

OUR UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Helen offered to answer any questions we sent her, then failed to do so. They included:

Would you put Faversham’s interests first if it meant voting against your party leadership?

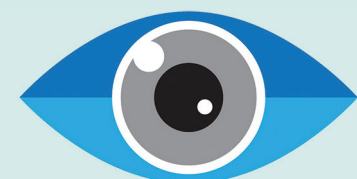
How would you improve the lives of local families in poverty?

Do you stand by your claim that Boris Johnson is an ardent feminist?

How do you justify your vote for a no deal Brexit when it will be disastrous for many local farmers?

Why didn’t you pay for the Leeds Castle junket?

You were fact checked live on air by the BBC, who revealed you were repeating misleading figures about Labour spending plans invented by Conservative central office. Will you now make a public correction?





HANNAH PERKIN LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Lib Dem candidate Hannah lives in Faversham and is married with a young family. She runs a vegan catering company and also works in Furlongs pub.

In May's local elections she won seats on both The Faversham Town and Swale Councils and she worked actively in both roles with a refreshing degree of transparency. A passionate and well-liked person who genuinely cares about

Faversham, she would be a loss to our local councils if elected as our MP.

Interviewed by the Eye however, Hannah struggled to defend the Lib Dems' use of dubious and widely condemned bar charts to exaggerate their local popularity or explain convincingly how the £50 billion extra money the Lib Dems have promised to spend, if we remain in the EU, would actually become available.

ELECTION PROMISES

- **Stop Brexit**
- **Saving a £50 billion 'remain bonus' by not leaving the EU**
- **Investment in public services**
- **Save the NHS**
- **Properly fund schools**
- **Bold action on the climate emergency**

ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS

What is your vision for the Future of Faversham Creek?

I recognise the huge importance of the creek to the Town and the creek's amazing heritage. I would love to see the bridge being swung. Faversham is a heritage-rich town and a revitalised creek can only enhance our attraction for visitors.

How would you help new small business establish themselves in Faversham and existing ones to survive?

Small businesses keep our towns vibrant and are an important part of our local economy. With business rates as high as they are, many are being forced to close. The Lib Dem manifesto pledges to replace business rates with a Commercial Landowner Levy, shifting the burden of taxation from tenant to landowner. It also includes a pledge to create a "start-up fund" to help new enterprises in their first weeks.

The area also needs low cost starter units, small affordable premises that could be used for a variety of purposes.

As an MP, I would support the work of trade associations and other organisations that promote and strengthen business relationships within the Borough. We need to improve active transport links across the area so residents are able to access businesses safely and without the use of cars where possible.

I would encourage residents to shop locally and independently, empower our local business community and do everything I can to promote the area as a tourist destination.

What are your proposals to improve local policing in the town?

The Lib Dem manifesto pledges £1 billion in local community policing, this equates to two police officers per ward in Faversham. We would also scrap the position of Police and Crime Commissioner and replace it with accountable police boards made up of local councillors.

How would you control unsustainable future housing developments in Faversham and surrounding areas?

Firstly, I would lobby the Government to allow freedom of flexibility in decision-making for local

authorities. Housing targets should be needs-based and achievable. At present, local authorities are bound by targets that do not promote sustainability and ignore our dire need for social housing. It is vital to be able to insist that before houses are built, the infrastructure to support them is provided in advance. This includes schools, medical practices and road infrastructure. A holistic approach is needed to balance housing needs with our obligation to prevent climate damage and biodiversity loss.

We need to build community not just houses. Part of this may also be making sure that local jobs come hand in hand with new developments so we can boost our local economy.

What is your position on the proposed solar power station on Graveney Marshes and why?

It is a totally obnoxious proposal and I have actively campaigned against it. I recently helped write the Town Council's letter of objection to the development. Whilst we must move towards sustainable energy generation the scale and siting of this scheme is unacceptable. It entails the industrialisation of an important biodiverse area of landscape, would necessitate around 80 lorry movements a day for over three years along small rural roads unsuitable for such heavy traffic and the battery storage facility presents serious pollution risks.

What would you do to improve the lives of residents on low incomes?

I and my family have only recently stopped receiving Universal Credit. We found it incredibly difficult to manage and only coped with the nine-week initial delay before receiving our first payment because of family help. The need to have to travel to Sittingbourne to deal with the paperwork was time-consuming and involved extra expense.

There needs to be a Universal Credit satellite service in Faversham to make it easier for local people to access the benefit.

Housing is a real problem, we need to look at the private rental market. Over the past six years, the average rent of a three bedroom house in Faversham has risen from £700 to £1,400 a month while income has barely changed.

Also, the so-called affordable housing built by

private developers needs to be made genuinely affordable.

Would you put Faversham's interests first if it meant voting against your own party?

I think a lot of people want their local MP to be transparent and forward-thinking about their constituent's concerns. The MP must weigh up the needs of Faversham against the wider constituency but I believe that our party allows for room to disagree with national policy.

What are your thoughts on tactical voting in this and the Canterbury Constituency especially where a vigorous Lib Dem campaign could help the Conservatives regain the seat?

We all deserve to be able to vote for who we want to represent us nationally. Rosie Duffield who won the seat for Labour at the last election in Canterbury is able to look after herself and though I accept that she works hard to promote the pro-EU position, her party is not committed to remain. The Lib Dems did approach the Labour Party to collaborate in appropriate constituencies but were rebuffed. It is not fair that we should be blamed for making it easier for the Conservatives to win seats.

Where do you stand on the demise of Faversham's Crown Post Office?

I really know little of the details about this. I would like to learn more about it.

If successful, how would you be able to juggle your existing commitments on Faversham and Swale Councils with the job as an MP?

If I was elected to parliament there would have to be a by-election for the Town and Swale council seats I currently occupy.

Local Lib Dems, in particular Antony Hook, have been widely criticised on social media for using Faversham's Remembrance Day ceremony as a photo opportunity. What is your response?

I was asked to lay a wreath by Swale as the representative of my ward. I am aware of the criticism about Antony Hook's behaviour at the ceremony but I think you must ask him about it, I do not think he is an opportunist and is in fact an honourable man.



HANNAH TEMPLE

GREEN PARTY



Green Party

Hannah, 33, has lived in Faversham with her husband for three years. An active member of the community, she is an Abbey Physic Community Garden trustee and a volunteer for local initiatives including Plastic Free Faversham.

Hannah has an educational background in geography and political economics and works in human rights, advising British businesses on issues such as workers rights and the environment. This is the first time she has stood for

parliament. The 2017 Green candidate was Alistair Gould, a local GP and now Swale Borough Councillor.

“The underlying theme for everything I’ve done in my life is trying to do something good,” Hannah says. “I’ve tried to pursue that not through politics but over the past couple of years it’s becoming increasingly apparent how serious the changes are that we need to make and how urgently we need to make them. Government is a huge place of power and an amazing channel to get things done.

“Sitting on the sidelines hasn’t worked. Many politicians are not acting in our interest. I can’t sit here while that happens, so I’m throwing my hat into the ring. We can’t afford to ignore the climate emergency or the inequalities in our society.

“The environment is related to every issue: tax, GDP, migration or healthcare. You can’t talk about any one of those topics unless you talk about it in a holistic sense.”

Describing itself as an alternative to traditional party politics, the Green Party says

it listens to local voices. It is hosting a Peoples’ Assembly to discuss what having a “strong” community means. The event promises “no politics, no being talked at, just a community conversation”.

Hannah says: “The climate emergency is currently the single biggest threat to our way of life. We are witnessing a devastating decline in the health of our land, oceans, air and wildlife. We desperately need a real Green New Deal to address climate chaos, prioritise renewables and public transport and deliver better quality of life. Our planet needs people in power who recognise that we are living in a climate emergency and are dedicated to taking real action. Now is the time for Green policies and Green politics. We must not miss this opportunity to alter the course of our future.”

ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS

What is your position on the proposed Graveney solar power station?

Cleve Hill Solar Farm caused a big debate within the Green Party. We took a lot of time to speak to a lot of different people to review information and to have in-depth discussions between ourselves. Obviously as a party we are hugely pro-solar and if we are going to meet emission targets to decarbonise our society then renewables need to be an essential part of that. There will always be some compromises with projects like this but the evidence around this development, particularly in terms of safety in regard to the li-ion batteries, the potential fires, the toxic chemicals, the acidity of the water that will result, seems not to be an if but a when. This means that we cannot support this particular development.

What’s the Green Party’s view on Brexit?

We support a people’s vote. We believe the big challenges such as climate change and migration do not stop at our borders. They are much better tackled internationally, working together with our partners. So being part of groups like the EU is really important. So that is where the Green Party is pro-Remain, however it doesn’t think the EU is perfect. But we can’t change them from the outside, we need to be at the table. So our policy is to remain and reform but we do believe in democracy, so if the majority of people do not want to be in the EU, we will support that.

What’s your view of future housebuilding and development in Faversham?

Yes, we need more housing, especially affordable housing. But that housing should not be built in the countryside where people will

need to travel, overwhelmingly by car, to get to work, reinforcing traffic, pollution and congestion problems.

We need to build on brownfield sites, close to existing infrastructures. Many of these housing developments seem to be completely contradictory to the Government’s commitments to carbon emissions. They are short-sighted and thoughtless. Our Green Swale Borough Councillors, Tim Valentine and Alistair Gould, have already made sure that no more of these types of developments are allowed through Swale Borough Council.

In terms of what’s already here, we can introduce green lanes to enable safer and easier transport by bike and for pedestrians, bike lockers, offer free cycle training, enforcing 20’s Plenty and improving public transport. The Greens would move proposed investment in roads into public transport. We are also advocating for local government control of public transport and for existing housing stock to be retrofitted with energy efficiency improvements.

This constituency covers more than just Faversham, what would your message be to the more rural communities?

The Green Party are the party of our countryside. We support the restoration and rewilding of our green spaces and oppose big developments in rural areas in favour of thoughtful development of brownfield sites. We are dedicated to giving real power back to local government and local people to control their own public services. We support small businesses and are working with farmers to help British agriculture transition to more sustainable and environmentally-friendly forms of land use.

What are your thoughts on tactical voting here?

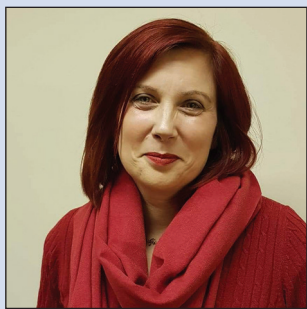
This is more than a Brexit election. This has to be much bigger. If we don’t stand, it would be a complete disgrace. This is a climate election. This may well be the last chance we get to take actual meaningful action on the climate emergency. We are the only party with a clear and costed plan to deliver net zero carbon emissions by 2030, not 2045, or 2050 as promised by other parties. We are the only party that is taking this issue really seriously. It is critical that we stand!

Faversham faces a health crisis with existing facilities struggling and a population set for huge expansion. What should be done?

This is us experiencing for ourselves the chronic underfunding that’s been going on over the past ten years. Every single one of us has a story about not being able to get a GP appointment. I am hearing that people cannot get access to medicines that they need and that staff are under increasing pressure. This is an essential service we will all need. It is ludicrous that we’re not funding it adequately.

ELECTION PROMISES

- **Act on Climate Emergency**
- **Green New Deal for economy**
- **Give local government more power**
- **Green and affordable housing**
- **People’s vote on Brexit**
- **Protect NHS**
- **Green public transport system**
- **Greater protection for animal welfare**
- **Opposed to Cleve Hill Solar Farm**
- **Opposed to Lenham Heath development**



JENNY REEVES LABOUR



Chair of the Faversham Labour branch for the last three years and a popular and active campaigner on local issues Jenny Reeves has lived here most of her life.

The 43-year-old mother-of-three lives on the Lower Road social housing estate and

is a full-time carer for her husband Gareth, who lives with disabilities.

“As a family, we have felt at first-hand the brutal effects of the austerity programme pursued by recent Conservative governments and their coalition partners,” says Jenny,

who often helps neighbours access help and advice. “I’ll argue their cases with the DWP and corrupt private landlords, because somebody has to. You learn to be an expert in all sorts of matters because you never know who’s going to knock at your door next!”

This is the first time Jenny has stood for parliament. In the last two general elections in 2015 and 2017, Labour’s candidate was Michael Desmond a councillor from Hackney, North London.

ELECTION PROMISES

- **Abolish university tuition fees**
- **Introduce an immediate Real Living Wage**
- **Kickstart a Green Industrial Revolution**
- **Fix the housing crisis**
- **Affordable housing to rent and buy**
- **Final say on Brexit**
- **Stop Boris Johnson’s disastrous sell-out Brexit deal**
- **Climate action plan**
- **Free national education service**

ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS

What’s your vision for Faversham Creek?

I’m a large supporter of Swing The Bridge and Faversham Creek Trust and would love to see the basin opened up and the creek brought back to its glory days. I remember from my childhood cars being stopped so boats could go through the bridge. I want to see it dredged, in full use and completely back to how it used to be.

What would you do about air pollution in Ospringe?

Increased use of public transport is priority number one. You cannot improve air quality unless you reduce car use. We cannot do an awful lot about the lorries – the depots are where they are – and an A2 bypass cannot happen unless you are going to knock down houses or a church, pave over agricultural land or a natural park and accept more development, which people don’t want.

We need proper, joined-up cycle routes, unlike the current ones which go nowhere, so people can feel safe cycling around town and 20’s Plenty, so the traffic’s going slower.

Cleve Hill solar power station: good or bad?

The local Labour branch were the only political party that made an official objection and we have been present at every single stage of the process. It’s too dangerous, it’s in the wrong place and it will devastate our environment. This is about profit, not power.

What’s your policy in housing and development?

Towns grow but the rates that developments are going up and how they’re going up is concerning. This town does not need four or five bedroom houses, we need one or two bedroom starter homes, social and properly affordable housing.

Developers build the most profit-making homes, not what’s needed locally. And Section 106 money (developers’ contributions to local authorities) is released in dribs and drabs so if they’re not selling, our local area is not getting that money.

How will Labour improve local policing and tackle antisocial behaviour?

We’ve got a difference between recorded crime and worrying but unrecorded crime. Where I live is not the most affluent area and I see it at first hand. We need to properly fund our police force and

restore our police station. It’s an absolute nonsense to say a town this size should not have a local police force.

Tactical voting: Why vote Labour over Lib Dem in Faversham?

In the last two general elections Lib Dems got about six percent of the vote here, including in 2017 which was after the referendum. By standing a candidate the Liberal Democrats split the remain vote, propping up a Conservative victory.

This election is not a Brexit referendum. It’s about ending Austerity and undoing ten years of horrific damage, including damage done by the Coalition government the Liberal Democrats were a part of. They cannot walk away from their history or wash their hands of the 120,000 deaths caused by Austerity.

How would you help local businesses?

Small businesses are vital. But we should also be encouraging large employers to come into Faversham. We are losing way too many shops. Independent shops are fantastic but they struggle without the anchor shops, the chains that bring people in to spend money. People go out of town to visit shops like Primark or Wilko, so we need a mix. We’ve lost Iceland and shops in that part of town have already said their footfall’s down. That’s a really disturbing trend.

How can Faversham solve its healthcare crisis?

Unfortunately we don’t have enough GPs. It’s not just a Faversham crisis, it’s a national, NHS crisis. And we have to be honest about the NHS funding shortfall. We now have the longest waiting times in NHS history for all treatments, not just A&E.

At Newton Place, they have a walk-in clinic. That is one of the longest queues you will see, on a daily basis. I’m hearing from people that are waiting two months to get a GP appointment. Two months, in both Faversham surgeries, for critical things like a lump! Anybody can say “let’s hire more GPs” but the reality is our health centres are already trying to do that. But they can’t hire what isn’t there.

How would you improve life for low-income families and pensioners?

I am on a low income and the first problem we’ve got is that Austerity is still in place. Pensioners, the sick and people on zero hour contracts are still struggling. Universal Credit is the

most heinous welfare reform this government has ever done. That will be scrapped by Labour and replaced with a proper system to help those people who need it most. Pensioners should not be forced to choose between eating and heating and I know too many in that position.

Let’s raise the minimum wage. Let’s get secure tenancy for people in private rented accommodation, free prescriptions and free school meals: simple, small things that can improve people’s lives a lot.

I don’t remember foodbanks ten years ago. Now we’ve got a foodbank, a school uniform bank and a baby bank here in Faversham. Today 75 percent of people who use food banks are in work. That’s ridiculous. People are in such dire need.

What’s your position on the loss of Faversham’s Crown Post Office?

I singlehandedly led the campaign to save it and was very cross that not one of the town councillors turned up to my public meeting. Not one. Nobody from KCC turned up. Our MP didn’t turn up. But town people came and I took the petition to 10 Downing Street. Our party, if in Government, will be restoring Crown post offices to high streets.

That all sounds great but I can’t vote for Jeremy Corbyn because The Sun reckons he’s a terrorist-sympathising anti-semitic communist who refuses to sing the national anthem or trigger nuclear armageddon...

Because the Conservative Party has lurched quite far right, in comparison the Labour Party looks quite far left. But our policies haven’t actually changed that much at all.

We’ve done experiments where people read the policies without seeing the Labour logo and say “I’d definitely vote for that party”. And as soon as you tell them those are Labour policies, they’ll say “I couldn’t vote for Labour”. Because there’s been so much negative propaganda. It’s destructive because people are essentially shooting themselves in the foot. They would rather not have policies they love than vote for a party that has been demonised.

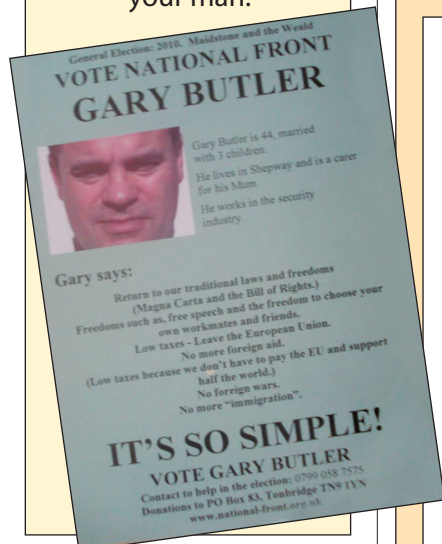


GARY BUTLER INDEPENDENT

Faversham and Mid Kent's only other candidate in this election is far-right no hoper Gary Butler from Maidstone. Although running as an Independent this time around, Butler has previously stood unsuccessfully as a parliamentary candidate for the racist-filled, far-right National Front and English Democrat parties.

We haven't received any current campaign literature from him, so we can't comment on his current policies. But his 2010 flyer proclaimed that voting Liberal, Labour or Conservative would result in "more invading foreigners", and that they were "working together whilst pretending to be separate parties", along with some pea-brained garbage about Government ministers "being of Eastern European (Marxist) extraction".

"It's so simple!" he concluded. So if you're into racism or facism and a bit simple, it looks like Gary Butler's your man.



TACTICAL VOTING WHO GETS THE EYE'S VOTE

For Faversham people wanting to vote tactically to change their MP, the choice boils down to Labour or Lib Dem. But which vote is most likely to count?

Faversham and Mid Kent has always been regarded as a safe Tory seat. For good reason: In 2017 the party won a significant majority here with more than 30,000 votes, compared with around 13,000 for Labour and just

over 3,000 for the Lib Dems.

But then so was Conservative stronghold Canterbury until the last general election, when it fell to Labour after 185 years by a margin of just 187 votes.

So, while there's every likelihood of another Tory win here, it's not over 'til it's over.

But if you don't want to be represented by Helen Whately MP any more, where

should you place your X and why?

Many people in the town have been impressed by Hannah Temple, the Greens' excellent local candidate (including at Eye HQ). Sadly, Hannah has zero chance of winning, so a Green vote will only dilute our chances of getting a new MP.

So what's the best bet: Labour or Lib Dem?

The Lib Dems enjoyed a huge swing in their favour back in May's local elections which initially made us wonder if they could repeat their success in the general election.

But, after much research, animated discussion, black coffee and head-scratching, our conclusion was no. It is wildly unlikely.

The Faversham and Mid Kent parliamentary constituency and Faversham the town are two very different things with very different voting patterns and election results.

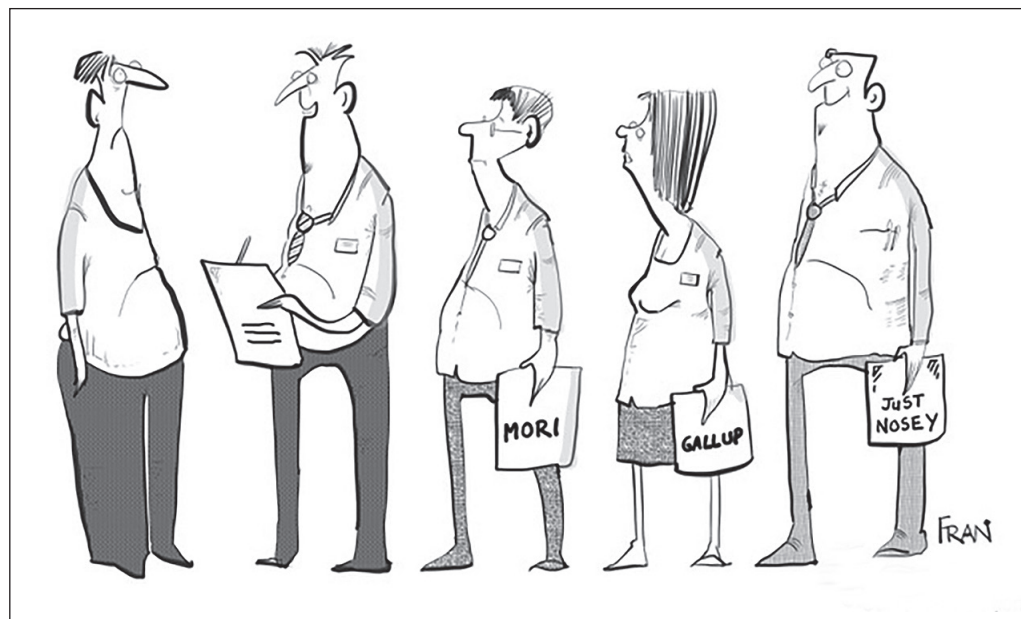
The constituency's boundary covers a much bigger area, stretching out towards Maidstone and taking in many staunchly Conservative-voting areas far outside Faversham.

Plus general election voter turnouts are much higher and choices are swayed more by national policies, personalities and issues than in local contests.

And whatever Lib Dem campaign leaflets might claim, their support has, if anything, dwindled in the Faversham and Mid Kent constituency over the last decade, as stats from previous elections reveal.

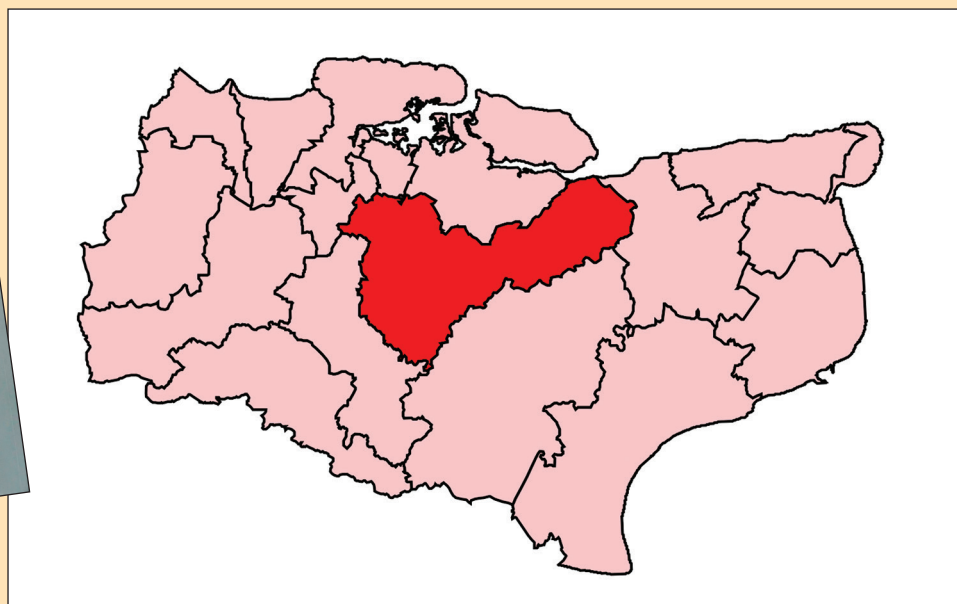
So while we're spoilt for choice with three very different but very capable local candidates – all women – standing against Helen Whately, the swing required for Lib Dem candidate Hannah Perkin to win the seat is simply unrealistic.

That's why we will be voting for Labour's Jenny Reeves. Jenny is a no-nonsense candidate with solid community links and a good track record on local issues. She has proved a passionate and articulate campaigner and we think she would make an effective local MP prepared to fight for Faversham's interests.



SWALE AND MID-KENT CONSTITUENCY

The Borough of Swale wards of Abbey, Boughton and Courtenay, Davington Priory, East Downs, St Ann's, and Watling, and the Borough of Maidstone wards of Bearsted, Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton, Boxley, Detling and Thurnham, Downswood and Otham, Harrietsham and Lenham, Headcorn, Leeds, North Downs, Park Wood, Shepway North, Shepway South, and Sutton Valence and Langley.



ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

We know this election has been astoundingly dirty and dishonest nationally but how have candidates conducted themselves on the Faversham and Mid Kent campaign trail? Have they followed the examples, good or bad, of their national party leadership?

In Helen Whately's case, the answer is a resounding yes. Helen wins the prize for the single most cynical ploy for her phoney "Save The Magna Carta" petition. After our Lib Dem town councillors had patiently explained to every newspaper in the land that they have absolutely no intention of selling the Magna Carta. Helen quickly got up an online petition to 'save' the document from the non-existent threat in a bid to capitalise on the non-story. Appalled constituents who took to Facebook to condemn the tactic found their comments rapidly deleted from Helen's Facebook page and calls for her to apologise ignored.

Helen has form on the fake news front. Early in the election campaign she was busted on air by the BBC's live fact checker for spouting made-up figures in a TV interview. Politics Live presenter Jo Coburn accused our MP of "spreading fake news" by claiming that the Labour Party's spending pledges would cost the UK £1.2 trillion before the party had even published a manifesto.

Just a few days before Conservative ex-chair Sayeeda Warsi said her own party is 'institutionally racist' and had "failed to tackle racism at any level", who should join Helen under her smart official campaign gazebo in Faversham's Market Place but Andrew "Tommy Robinson" Bowles, the disgraced former Tory leader of Swale Borough Council. Bowles achieved national notoriety earlier this year when he retweeted support for Stephen Yaxley-Lennon — alias Islamophobic hate-slinger "Tommy Robinson" — and was subsequently booted out by voters in local elections. Yaxley-Lennon has since endorsed Boris Johnson.

But sadly, the Conservatives aren't the only party guilty of questionable judgement. Unlike Labour and the Conservatives, who both wisely suspended campaigning for the morning, the Lib Dems decided to employ a photographer to take publicity shots of MEP Antony Hook and candidate Hannah Perkin during the Faversham Remembrance Parade. Turning the event into a party photo-op cost the Lib Dems considerable respect locally. They will soon find out if it has cost them votes.

Lib Dems also drew criticism for their election pamphlets misrepresenting the contest here as a two-horse race with a tactical vote for them the only way to avoid

Brexit. But even a cursory glance at previous general election results reveals the odds of a Lib Dem win here in the Faversham constituency are about the same as those of a Lib Dem government: in other words, about as likely as a speed boat made of cheese. In the last two general elections Lib Dems claimed just six percent of the vote, while Labour's share rose from 16 percent in 2015 to 26 percent in 2017.

Yet their campaign kicked off with leaflets proclaiming "It's Remain with Lib Dems or Brexit here" and featuring graphs predicting a Lib Dem vote share of 22.6 percent with the Brexit Party on 44.6 percent. These projections were made by University of London professor Chris Hanretty using figures from May's European elections. But there's a problem: Prof Hanretty himself admitted the figures "tell us almost nothing about future general elections" because "European Parliament elections are different from Westminster elections in many ways".

Furthermore, there is no Brexit Party candidate standing in Faversham and Mid Kent. After none other than Donald Trump instructed Nigel Farage to "work with Boris" live on the Brexit Party leader's LBC radio show, Farage pulled his candidates from Tory majority constituencies to avoid splitting the Leave vote. They included local Brexit Party hopeful Graeme Jenkins — a fleet manager for a Japanese car manufacturer — who was ordered to stand down, leaving Faversham's hard Brexiteers with Johnson's flaccid offering as their only voting option. It's not known if Nigel ever refunded Graeme's £100 entry fee.

By far the most disturbing aspect of the local election campaign so far is the

anonymous and cowardly intimidation of Lib Dem candidate Hannah Perkin and her young family. Remain supporter Hannah received a threat to burn down her house, written on a campaign leaflet, soon after she was subject to abusive Tweets from a far-right political group. It echoed a similarly repellant incident in the run up to May's local elections when a Lib Dem member's car was vandalised with swastika graffiti.

A Green Hustings event in a packed Guildhall organised by Swale Friends of the Earth gave the town's voters a chance to grill candidates on the environment. Four out of five of them anyway. The fifth name on the ballot, ex-National Front activist Gary Butler from Maidstone stayed away. Presumably the only environment Gary cares about is a Hostile Environment.

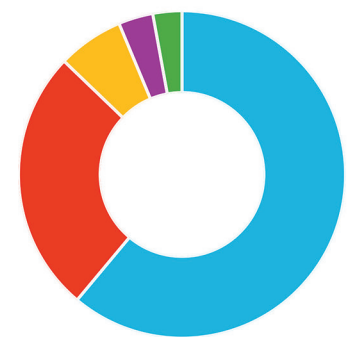
With the Conservative's track record on environmental issues, not to mention her own voting record, this was never going to be an easy evening for Helen Whately and she appeared visibly uncomfortable. When her unintentionally hilarious assertion that "Boris is genuinely committed to buses" brought the house down, the campaign smiles dropped momentarily, betraying a flash of anger.

First time parliamentary candidates Lib Dem Hannah Perkin and Labour's Jenny Reeves both gave good accounts of themselves and their parties. But the Greens' Hannah Temple stole the show. Even allowing for an already sympathetic audience, Hannah showed herself to be a compelling speaker with a sharp mind who had clearly done her homework, notably on her Conservative opponent's fossil fuel industry links.

ELECTION DATA FOR THE CONSTITUENCY 2015 AND 2017

2017

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	SHARE
Helen Whately	Conservative	30,390	61.1%
Michael Desmond	Labour	12,977	26.1%
David S. Naghi	Liberal Democrat	3,249	6.5%
Mark McGriffin	UKIP	1,702	3.4%
Tim Valentine	Green	1,431	2.9%
TURNOUT		49,749	65.5%
CONSERVATIVES HOLD		WINNING MARGIN	17,413



2015

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	SHARE
Helen Whately	Conservative	24,895	54.4%
Peter Edwards-Daem	Ukip	8,243	18%
Michael Desmond	Labour	7,403	16.2%
David S. Naghi	Liberal Democrat	3,039	6.6%
Tim Valentine	Green	1,768	3.9%
Hairy Knorn Davidson	Monster Raving Looney Party	297	0.6%
Gary Butler	English Democrat	158	0.3%
TURNOUT		45,803	65.9%
CONSERVATIVES HOLD		WINNING MARGIN	16,652



FAVERSHAM EYE XMAS APPEAL

The *Faversham Eye* Christmas Special issue is out on Saturday, December 21 and we'll be handing out copies in the Market Place as usual.

As always, the paper will be free but we would like to ask a small favour in return. If you can spare a food item or two please bring them along.

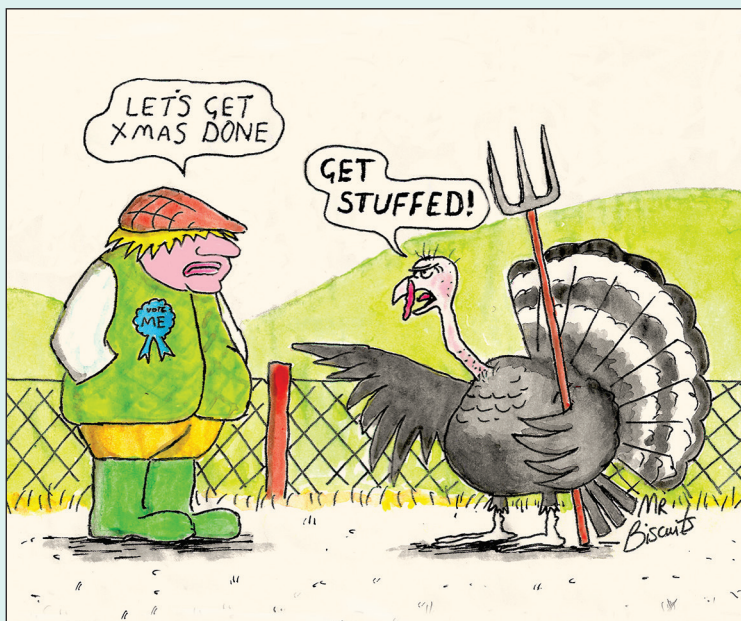
The *Eye* will contact local foodbanks and charities to make sure your donations reach families in need.

Foodbanks are expecting this Christmas to be their busiest yet as more and more people -- many in working families -- fall into poverty. They need food items that are high in nutrition and long-lasting, such as tinned fruits and vegetables, cereals and soups. Non-food essentials such as toiletries and hygiene products are also required.

Most needed items over the Christmas period include:

Christmas Pudding
Mince Pies
Tea, Coffee & Milk (long-life)
Vegetables, Soups & Meats (tinned)
Custard (tinned)
Cooking Oil
Fruit Juice (long-life)
Washing-up liquid
Tinned fish
Dog food
Jams
Sponge Puddings
Shampoo and shower gel
Toiletry Sets

Please give generously. And if you work with a local foodbank or charity, please get in touch via favershameye@outlook.com to discuss how we can help.



IS THIS THE EYE'S MOST SENIOR READER?

Pictured perusing the back page of Issue Six (without glasses!) is 102-year-old May Wellard.

"I like to keep up with events in Faversham," says May at her care home in South East London. "I used to visit the town regularly to stay with my son John. I just hope his involvement won't make the local council send the police around again!"

May vividly remembers daylight air raids in World War Two and, with her family, narrowly escaped a flying bomb attack. A teacher for 30 years in a deprived area of London and a staunch Labour supporter, she fully intends to cast her vote in the 2019 general election.

History Corner THE REFERENDUM TO LEAVE

In 1960, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd held a referendum with the objective of taking back control from the British Monarchy and forming a republic. Its primary objective was to reinforce the protection of whites and entrench Afrikaans nationalism. Verwoerd believed that staying within the Britain Monarchy would lead to racial clashes, economic hardship and poor internal security. A few years earlier the voting age was reduced from twenty-one to eighteen, with many younger voters supporting Verwoerd's Nationalist Party. Only whites were eligible to vote.

On the day of the referendum, the *Natal Witness*, the province's English newspaper, warned its readers that leaving the British Union would "help those who would cut us loose from our moorings, and set us adrift in a treacherous and uncharted sea".

The referendum was narrowly won by 52%. Many English-speaking whites regarded Britain as their spiritual home and became lost and disillusioned.

In the years that followed, apartheid intensified in the face of growing abhorrence which led to South Africa becoming an international pariah.

With thanks to Steve Bloom whose photographic exhibition: *Beneath the Surface, South Africa in the Seventies* is currently on at the Beaney, Canterbury.



ALL THE FACTS
Where to find *The Faversham Eye*
Pick up free copies
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The Hot Tin cafe
Whitstable Road

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Barber
St Mary's Rd

Corner Tap
Preston St

KGN News
Preston St

Brents Tavern
Upper Brents

Furlongs
Preston St

Sondes Tea House
Selling

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About us
The Faversham Eye is a free, independent publication produced by Brian Pain and Richard Fleury with generous help from members of the community. It's a volunteer project but Brian covers production costs (printing isn't cheap). Our aim is to inform, educate, entertain and promote local democracy.

