

The Westbrook

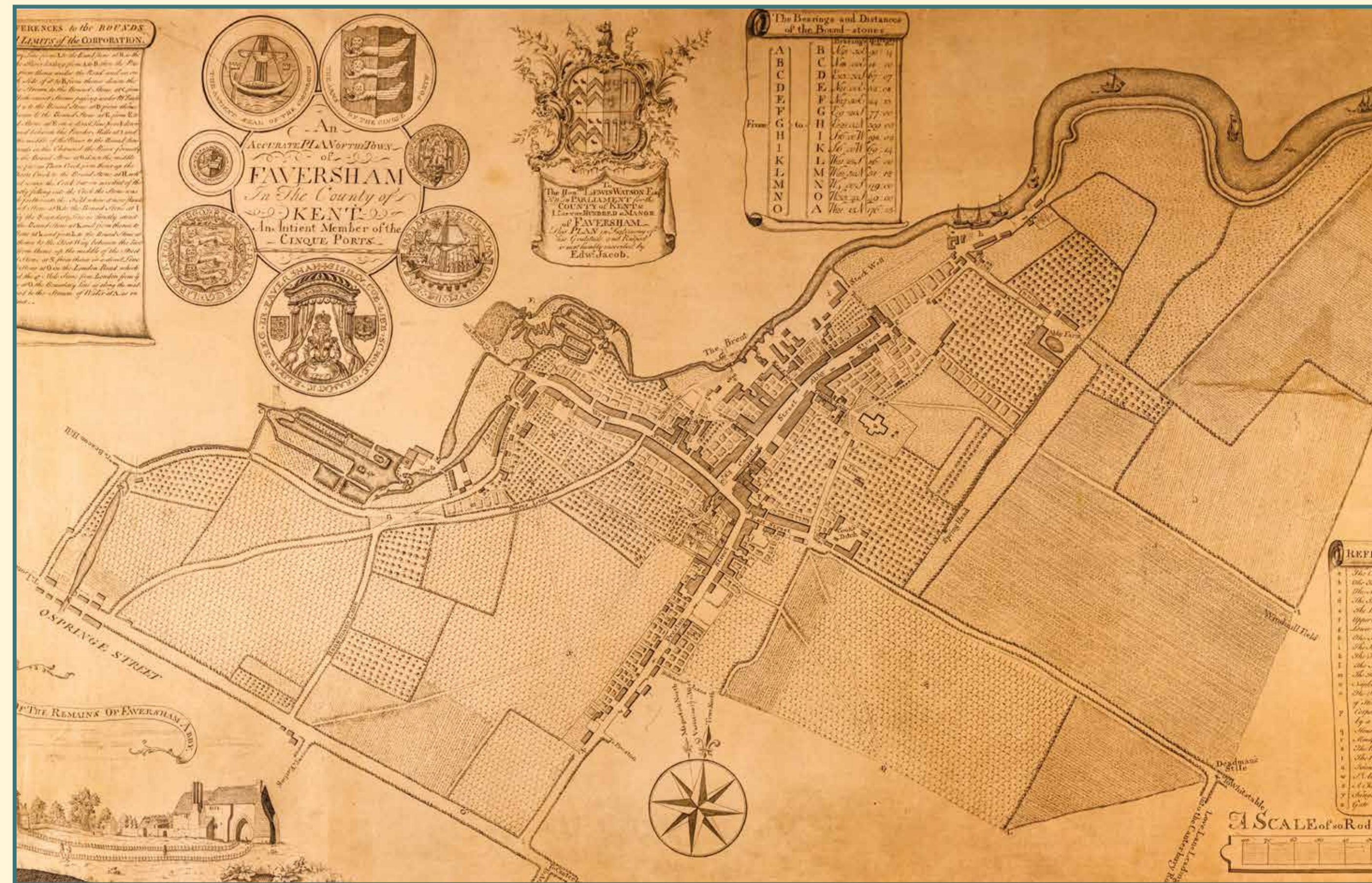
A stream in flux

A brief history of The Westbrook

The Westbrook started life as a natural chalk stream rising in the valley to the south-east of Painter's Forstal, flowing through what is now Lorenden Park, along Water Lane in Ospringe, through west Faversham to the creek. Today, largely due to water abstraction, the Westbrook's flow is intermittent and it no longer flows at all, between Painter's Forstal and Ospringe.

The course of the stream has been changed multiple times over its history to suit local needs. Originally used to power water mills in the early 18th century the stream was dammed close to where you are standing, to create a mill pond for Chart Mills gunpowder works, as shown in the map from 1752 (Jacobs). You are standing roughly where the people in the boat on the map are. Later the pond became an ornamental lake for St Ann's House (built around 1785), which stood just to the north of here.

In the 1920s the lake was converted to watercress beds. Between the 1950s and 1970s the Westbrook was covered over along part of its length, the watercress beds filled in, St Ann's House demolished and the surrounding housing estates built.



Chalk streams – a globally rare habitat

The Westbrook is one of over a dozen chalk streams that flow into the Thames Estuary along this part of the north Kent coast.

There are fewer than 300 chalk streams in the world, most of them in the UK. They are typically fed by springs where clean, cool water flows from the underground chalk aquifer and provides a unique habitat for wildlife (like kingfishers and critically endangered European eels) to thrive. Sadly, many chalk streams are at risk from being lost, due to issues such as pollution and abstraction.



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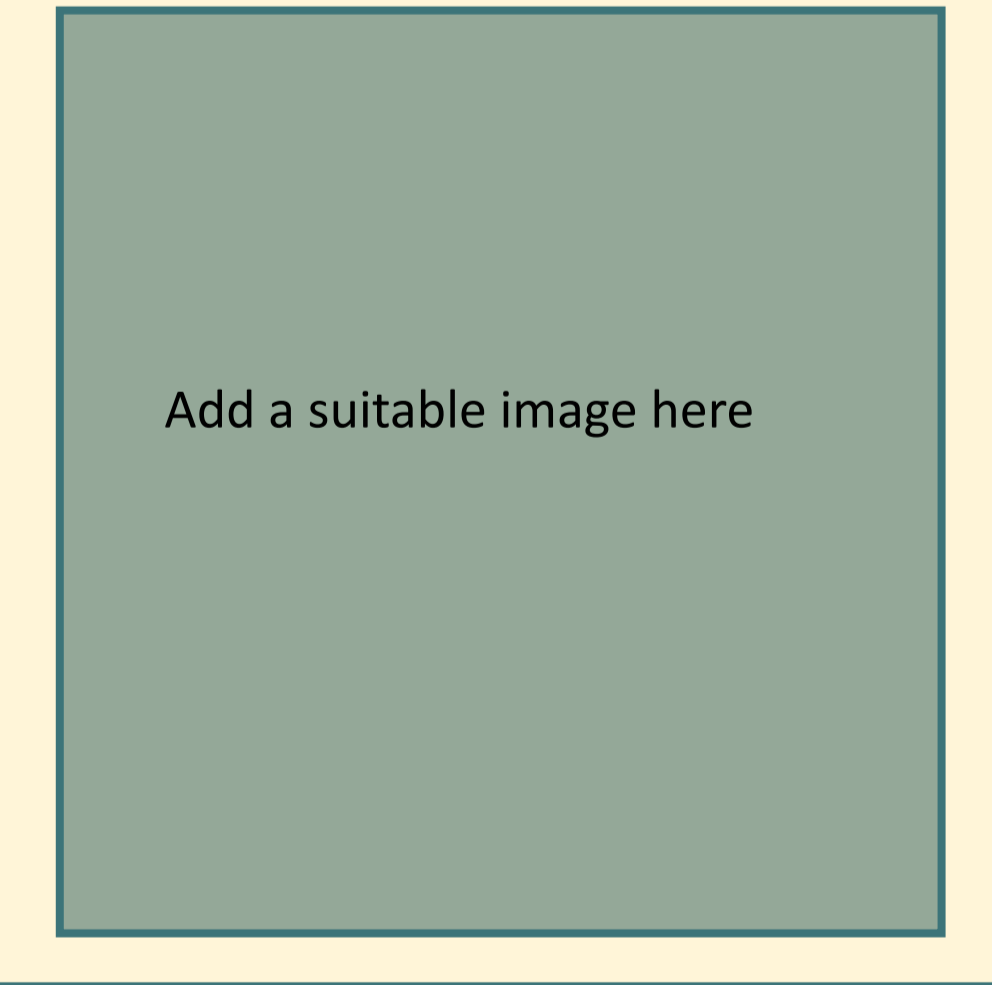
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Add a suitable image here



The stream is cared for by the Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond, a local community group that works to clean, manage and restore this cherished amenity. In 2022 the group received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.



Chart Mills
FavershamSociety.org/
ChartGunpowder-Mills



Friends of the
Westbrook and
Stonebridge Pond
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