

## WHITSTABLE MARITIME

### FAVERSHAM BOAT YARD NOTES

Faversham has a long and distinguished tradition of boat building and repair, using skills passed on through local apprenticeships, served locally and at nearby yards in Whitstable. Alan Staley, shipwright, boatbuilder and sparmaker is one of the last remaining practitioners of this craft, working exclusively in wood from his premises at The Old Sawmill, Chambers Wharf, Faversham (post code ME13 7BT).

Alan served his apprenticeship in the late 1950's early 1960's at Andersons, which was then the largest yard in Whitstable; what remains can be seen, alongside relics of other yards, in a walk along the Island Wall between the Royal Native Oyster Stores and the Neptune Inn. In 1974, Alan began working on his own account and moved to The Old Sawmill in 1991, meanwhile continuing the practice of employing and training apprentices, some of whom have gone on to open their own yards, thus demonstrating the practical outcome of Alan's commitment and dedication to his craft. In 2013, these efforts were rewarded by the presentation, by HRH The Prince of Wales, of the Craft Skills Award for teaching skills in the workplace.

The Old Sawmill lies alongside a manmade waterway and was once used to cut and store pit props for the mines of the Kent coalfield. Between the building and the creek a railway line was constructed, serving both the mill and the adjacent fertiliser warehouse, which connected the waterside to Faversham, thereby giving access to one of the main lines from London to Kent. Not only was rail access available but the waterway itself was used by small cargo vessels, and the reason why this was cut was so as to avoid the narrow twists and turns in the main waterway leading to the Swale, thus making for an a more accessible and easier passage.

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