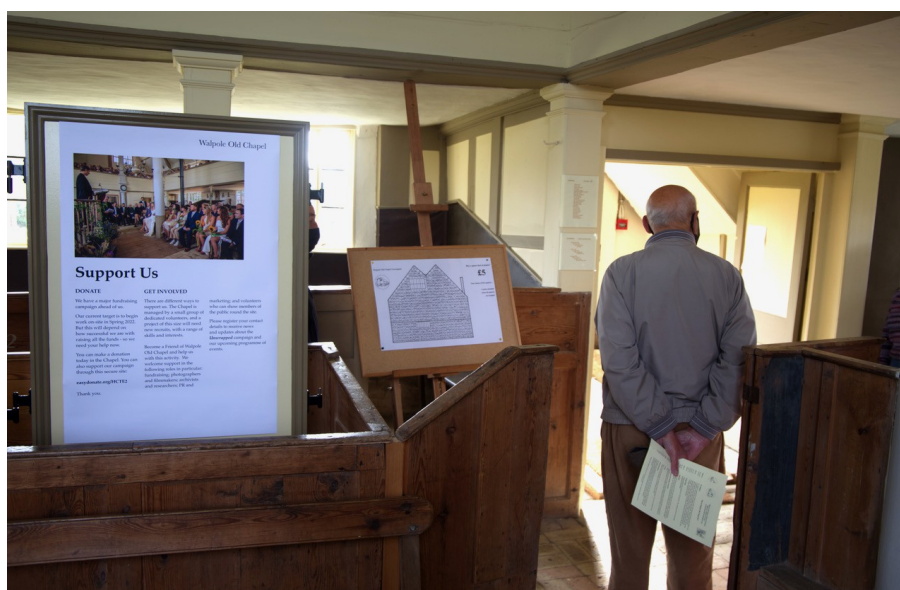


Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

The old chapel 'unwrapped' – public launch

After delays and much deliberation, the public launch of our 'unwrapped' project went ahead on 10th October. We were happy to welcome a modest number of hardy souls who braved the rising numbers of covid cases and the onset of the colder weather to see the 'open chapel' exhibition. Visitors were able to find out about activities at the chapel, and about the 'unwrapped' project through a series of displays, slideshows and handouts. Many stayed to chat and made donations to help get our fundraising underway. We would like to thank everybody who came along to help launch the project.



Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Covid 19 update

At the time of writing, a week into the second lockdown, the chapel is closed for events and groups. However, we are happy to open up for individuals who want to visit for prayer, contemplation, meditation and similar activities. Please contact Anne or Simon using the details at the end of this newsletter.

Report provides comprehensive history

We have now received the 'RIBA Stage 2 – Concept Design Report' from our architect – Kirstie Robbins. This provides an outline of the historical development of the building and a detailed description of recent works undertaken at the chapel. It clearly demonstrates that the problems we face with the external render go back several decades, and that successive attempts at repair have failed to 'fix' them.

Indeed, Kirstie is steering us away from a mindset that the problems with the render can ever be 'fixed' – in the sense of a repair that can be left unattended for years or decades, whatever approach we take. She is advising us that routine maintenance, including additional coats of limewash, is likely to be key to a solution that is both structurally and aesthetically satisfactory in the long term. The photo below shows the extensive lath and render repairs of 1995, which have since failed.



We are now moving towards applying for listed buildings consent for the renovation, but there are a few further steps we need to carry out first. One of these is to have a structural engineer look at the roof timbers, to see if any of them need to be repaired or replaced as part of the works. We also have yet to decide whether there are any patches of existing render that can be retained and refurbished, or whether the whole lot will have to be replaced.

Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Bats in the belfry!

What!? Surely Walpole Old Chapel doesn't have a belfry. Well no, it hasn't. And you might be forgiven for thinking that non-conformist chapels would not have approved of bells, or belfries. But, in fact, that seems not always to have been the case. We recently came across a list of non-conformist chapels with bell(s) in England, compiled between 2014 and 2016 by Dr Leonard Smith. This details bells, including 'clock bells' and 'tolling bells' in 129 non-conformist chapels across 29 English counties. The Welsh non-conformists seem to have been more austere, as only a single Welsh chapel with a single bell is identified in the list.

So, no bells or belfry at Walpole Old Chapel, but we do have bats. In order to gain listed buildings consent for the re-rendering of the chapel we will need to demonstrate that we have a good understanding of the ecology of the whole site, and that the construction plan will minimise disruption to any protected species. Because different animal species are active/visible/breeding at different times of year, the local planning authority will often want to see two or three ecological surveys, carried out at different seasons. We started out by commissioning an initial ecology survey in September this year, and we were delighted to find that there was “*extensive evidence of brown long eared bats*”.



As well as doing our best to ensure the bats are not disturbed by the planned works to the building, we are exploring whether, and how the chapel might play a role in the wider understanding and conservation of bats locally. More on this in later editions

Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Same sex marriages

The legislation making same sex marriages legal in England & Wales was passed in 2013. However, it did not automatically follow that same sex couples could get married in any place that was registered to carry out marriages between couples of the opposite sex. Instead, venues have had to apply separately for registration to host same sex weddings. Many secular venues have applied and have become registered. But it is not so easy to find somewhere if you are a same sex couple who wants a religious marriage service. The Church of England, for example, has chosen not to register its parish churches for same sex weddings.

The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel decided, at a meeting in October 2017, to seek registration of the chapel for same sex marriages. As a registered place of worship, this would allow us to host Christian marriage services, of a broadly Congregationalist nature, for same sex couples.

The process has been very long and often frustrating. It involved the local register office in Lowestoft and the general register office in Stockport. It also involved the Historic Chapels Trust, as freehold owner of Walpole Old Chapel. Delays in chains of communication and changes in personnel at the various offices meant it was not till October 2020 that we finally received our registration certificate. Revd. Bill Mahood – Minister at Walpole, commented *“We have had to wait a long time for it and all of us have had to work very hard at times, and to go on challenging those who seemed either unwilling or unable to understand what we were doing This is about justice and human rights, it is about no longer colluding in the persecution of a minority group and I am proud that Walpole Old Chapel is playing a strong part in that.”*

We have two 'authorised persons' who can register opposite sex marriages at the chapel, and we have now applied for them to be authorised to also register same sex weddings. We are hoping this process will be much quicker than the process for registering the building!

Did you know?

At periods during the C17th there was a severe shortage of small change in circulation. From 1648 till 1679 ordinary traders (illegally) issued 'Farthing Tokens' to enable low value trade to carry on. We have recently found out that Samuel Folkard, Grocer of Walpole and one of the six original trustees of the chapel, was one such trader.

A farthing token of his, dated 1668, was sold in 2019. Also, we have found out that the British Museum has a Folkard halfpenny token. Follow this link to see the photos - www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_T-5217

Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Ivy for wildlife

*I am ivy, a real high-flyer
Via bark and stone I scale tree and spire,
You call me ground cover, I say sky-wire.*

From Lost Words, Robert MacFarlane



Clinging to a supporting tree or wall by its fine rootlets, ivy is a familiar, woody evergreen plant and one of the few native climbing plants to reach any size. In the autumn, the plant's small, yellowish-green flowers are a magnet for a myriad of hoverflies, wasps, bees and butterflies. The flowers are particularly important for pollinating insects as they provide a source of nectar when there are few other flowers around.

The dark berries ripen in the early spring when most other seeds have been eaten so are a welcome food for hungry blackbirds, thrushes and starlings. In the winter, clumps of dense ivy can provide a safe refuge for sheltering small birds like wrens, or mammals like hedgehogs.

Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Ivy often grows vigorously and may need pruning to make sure it does not swamp other plants. The best time to cut it back is after it has finished flowering and the berries have been taken.

The use of ivy and holly in Christmas wreaths arose through a superstition that goblins were most active at Christmas time. To guard against them, the custom arose of hanging ivy and other evergreens on the doors, beams and above the fireplace.

Buy a square of render

Our 'buy a square of render' competition has proved to be a popular way for chapel visitors to donate to the 'unwrapped' project fund. As shown below, there were 632 squares for sale at the launch, at £5 per square. One of these squares has already been chosen as the winning number. The prize, for the person who buys the winning numbered square, is a voucher for a meal for two in a local pub. Please see the details below if you would like to enter this competition.

Walpole Old Chapel Unwrapped

Buy a square foot of plaster!

£5

Your choice of 632 squares...

A prize awarded when all squares are bought!

To enter: Please contact our Treasurer – Lyn Banks - at lynbanks55@gmail.com to choose a number or numbers that are still available. You can then make your donation online at <http://easydonate.org/HCTE2>

Walpole Old Chapel – December 2020

Did you know?

We believe the old chapel stands on land once owned by the cistercian monks of Sibton Abbey. Following the dissolution of the monasteries the 'manor of Sibton' changed hands several times, until it came into possession of the Levett Scrivener family, who still own it today.

We have a copy of a short document, dated 20th October 1934, in which Egerton Bagot Byrd Levett Scrivener acknowledges receiving two pounds and five shillings from the Trustees of Walpole Chapel “ ... *for the absolute release and extinguishment of the yearly rent of two shillings payable in respect of the property held by them freely of the said Manor and described in the court rolls as The Meeting House Walpole...* ”

Thank you for your generous donation!

- The Doric Charitable Trust
- Norman Hatcher
- Cllr. Stephen Burroughes (Suffolk County Council Locality Budget)
- Paul Simmons

How you can help

If you would like to find out more or to get involved, please do get in touch. We'd be really pleased to hear from you! This is a big, and quite complex project, with the bulk of the work being carried out by local volunteers. We would welcome more help right now, including in the following areas -

- publicity in various formats – print, website, social media
- researching and writing grant applications
- organising local fundraising events
- reasearching and writing up or recording local stories
- making a record of the project itself

Contact information

Anne Thomas or Simon Weeks T. 01986 784348 or secretary@walpoleoldchapel.co.uk to:

- volunteer to help
- request back copies of the newsletter
- ask to be taken off the circulation list
- respond to something you've read in the newsletter