



# Walpole Old Chapel - June 2021



## Re-opening to the Public

We are very pleased to announce that the Chapel will be open to the public from Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June. Covid regulations permitting, it will be open on Saturday afternoons, from 2.00pm till 4.30pm, right through till 30<sup>th</sup> October (except for 17<sup>th</sup> July, when there will be filming in the Chapel). This year, for the first time, we will also be open to the public on Wednesday afternoons during the school summer holidays. We are very much looking forward to welcoming visitors to the Chapel again.

We had to cancel virtually all our public events last year, so we are excited to also be able to confirm that we are planning a programme of services, concerts and other public events for the rest of this year. Details are provided on our [website](#).



## A Service of Remembering and Thanksgiving - Revd Bill Mahood.

All of us are very conscious of the events and demands of the past year. We know how we have responded to the long periods of lockdown, something that probably we never thought could happen in our lifetime. We have been very aware of how it has affected the whole country but, even more, we have been aware of our own fears and our concerns for the people we love. We have been aware of the demands that have been made upon our systems of care and the hard work of doctors and nurses and everyone involved in these services.

It is likely that just about all of us will know someone who caught Covid, maybe someone who died, and we have been shocked by the huge numbers involved. Now is the time to stop for a moment together, to remember and to give thanks. This will be the purpose of the Service we will hold at Walpole Old Chapel on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> June at 3:00pm. I will lead the Service. A short address will be given by Revd Malcolm Doney - a regular contributor to *Pause for Thought* on BBC Radio 2, and *Something Understood* on Radio 4. He describes himself as an "agnostic Christian". He lives in Blythburgh with his wife Meryl, Dot the dog and eight chickens. Come and join us for this important event at the Chapel.



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## Hexachordia

Another event we are looking forward to this summer is a concert by early music trio – Hexachordia ([www.hexachordia.com](http://www.hexachordia.com)). We were very sorry they had to cancel last year's concert celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the voyage of the independent 'pilgrims' in *The Mayflower*, and the founding of the Plymouth colony. So, we are delighted they will be playing at WOC on the afternoon of 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Hexachordia will present a concert of music and readings inspired by style and fashion in sixteenth-century England. Singing and playing on lutes, renaissance guitar, viols, recorders and bagpipes, the group will present tunes heard at the royal court by composers such as John Dowland and John Johnson, reflecting the upper-class preoccupation with fine lace, dainty slippers and colourful clothes. The trio also play and sing music popular at lower levels of society, including rounds and catches on petticoats, garters and hats!

## **Greensleeves & Yellow Lace**

a concert of music and readings inspired by  
style and fashion in the sixteenth century

performed by

**Hexachordia**

[www.hexachordia.com](http://www.hexachordia.com)



## **Walpole Old Chapel**

Halesworth Road, Walpole IP19 9AZ

**Sunday 18th July at 3pm**

Tickets £10 available on the door



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## Fundraising Appeal

A huge 'thank you' from WOC to everybody who has donated to our 'unwrapped' project fundraising appeal. It has been a challenging time to be raising money for an old building, as families and businesses have faced such pressing needs over the last year. The pandemic has also meant the Chapel has been closed for most of the year, so we have not been able to hold any fundraising events here.

So, we are delighted to have reached our initial target – raising £10,000 to cover the costs of the specialist surveys needed before we can apply for Listed Buildings Consent for the renovation works. The initial ecology survey found evidence of brown long-eared bats in the roof. This means we will need to carry out two more bat surveys during the year – one in the summer and one in the autumn, before we can apply for LBC, but it's reassuring to know we do have the funds for those.

It has been very heart-warming to read the comments left by people who have contributed via our online donations page. It has reminded us that the Chapel is an important place for many different communities – people coming here for baptisms, weddings, funerals and other services; people interested in family history, architecture and local/religious history; as well as people who value it as a unique space for the arts. Do [have a look](#) and see for yourself.

But we can't sit back and say, 'job done'. We are a small group of volunteers, dedicated and passionate about saving Walpole Old Chapel, but we are reaching the limit of what we can do on our own. We are likely to have to pay for professional help for some of our next steps towards being in a position to submit a credible application for the estimated £250,000 total cost.

## A visitor to the Chapel – Bill Mahood

About six months ago I wrote to the Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge – Dame Fiona Reynolds. We have a strong historical link with the college, as the first three Chapel ministers all studied at Emmanuel. My purpose in writing was to ask if the College might make a donation to the Chapel in preparation for the major work on the building. The response I received from Dame Fiona was that the College does not have a fund for making substantial donations. Nevertheless, it kindly sent £1,000.

A few weeks ago, I had an email from The Master asking if she could visit the Chapel on 9th May. She had been very keen to visit WOC since I had written to her and she had looked at photographs on the Web. She would combine it with a visit to see the painted ceiling at Huntingfield Parish Church and walk between the two buildings. These visits and the walk would be the basis of an article that she was planning to write for the magazine *Country Life*.



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She was at the Chapel for about 45 minutes and was clearly interested in the building and its history. It would not be an over-estimate to say that she delighted in everything from the box pews, to the quirky seating in the gallery to the wonderful Suffolk light streaming in through the windows. For me it was a great joy to meet her and to see the Chapel again through the eyes of someone with a great experience of historic buildings, I look forward to reading the article in *Country Life*.

### Join our Voyage of 'Discovery' - Vic Gray

While the challenging task goes on of securing funding for the major restoration work needed at the Chapel, we have decided to push ahead with an exciting project to explore and publicise the history of the Chapel and its congregation across the three and a half centuries of its life.

The Walpole Old Chapel 'Discovery' project will be very much a 'community' project, involving local people who would like to learn a bit more about the Chapel and are able to give up some time to help explore some of the recesses of its past. The struggle to establish a congregation here in the face of the political turmoil in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the lives of the ministers, the nature of the congregation (who were they; did they come from any particular social group; how far did they travel to come here?), what part did the Chapel play in the life and history of the village, how did the Chapel connect to other similar congregations in the area: these are just some of the subjects and questions we hope to explore. And others will undoubtedly emerge as we embark on the journey of discovery.

The results of the project will be publicised in a variety of ways, to make them accessible to as many people as possible. This could include a new publication, an exhibition and material on the Chapel's website. We hope the findings will give us a new understanding and respect for the people whose lives touched upon and were touched by the Chapel over many centuries.

The project will be led by Vic Gray, who has been involved throughout his working life with historical research, and who loves nothing more than to show other people the delights of delving into the past and the satisfaction to be had from making discoveries, big and small. Where needed, there will be opportunities for volunteers to learn how to read historical documents or to interview local people with stories to tell. There will be trips, for those who are interested, to record offices and libraries to explore relevant documents. No experience is required; curiosity and the willingness to give up some time over the course of a year and to develop some new skills are more important.



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The 'Discovery' project will get under way in September, but we are already looking for people to 'sign up' as part of the team. If you would like to know more or just to talk it through to see if you think it is for you, you can contact Vic Gray on [VicGray8a@gmail.com](mailto:VicGray8a@gmail.com) or you can ring him at 01986 872437. We hope you might join us on what will be a fascinating journey.

### Become a Friend of Walpole Old Chapel - Paul Simmons

Until recently the 'Friends' was the name for those good souls who volunteered to work for the Chapel and help administer its affairs under the aegis of the Historic Chapels Trust. These Friends have now been renamed 'Members' whilst the issue of governance is reviewed. The 'old Friends' maintained an email list of those people who wished to follow news of the Chapel events. The Committee felt that they might form the core of a new group of 'Friends' who would contribute a small sum annually towards the basic upkeep of the Chapel [it costs £7,000 a year, excluding major works], get preferential information about events and come together as a supporter group at an annual event [watch out for news of this years!] and feel more engaged and valued.

There has been a 'soft launch' therefore and all on that list reading this will have been contacted by the new Friends' Membership Secretary, Paul Simmons. Many of you have responded positively and we hope that many more will see the value of such a group both to the Chapel and to themselves.

We plan particularly to encourage local members both in the villages of Walpole and Cookley as well as nearby Halesworth to join with us, as well as those members of organisations that regularly use the Chapel for events. Our next stage of outreach therefore will be to have a leaflet drop via the monthly Halesworth Community News.

The current newsletter will in future be the 'Friends' Newsletter', sent only to those who have joined as new Friends; a copy will be placed on the newly designed Chapel website for others. Those on the current mailing list who decide not to join us will continue to get occasional updates on events in the Chapel as in earlier years before there was a newsletter.

If you haven't joined the new Friends yet, please do think about doing so - the subscription is only £10 but, with others, that soon adds up to help keep the Chapel open and solvent. Please contact [friends@walpoleoldChapel.org](mailto:friends@walpoleoldChapel.org) for a membership application form.





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Chapel now open for summer visitors – Dorothy Casey

*"This guest of summer  
The temple haunting martlet does approve,  
By his beloved masonry, that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,  
The air is delicate."*



Macbeth Act 1 Scene 6 – William Shakespeare  
(Martlet is another name for the house martin)

For many years, a small colony of house martins arriving in Walpole from their long migratory journey have chosen a perfect spot under the eaves of the Chapel to build their mud nests. Masters of flight, swooping and diving and feeding exclusively on flying insects – beetles, flies and aphids, they are very noticeable when they are in the air. They are easily distinguished from their close relative, the swallow, by their short forked tails, white rump and underparts. Unlike swallows, who prefer to nest in barns and sheds, house martins favour the outside of buildings. Their cup-shaped nests are diligently built over 10 days with 1000 beak-sized pellets of mud.

In 1774, the godfather of nature writing, Gilbert White wrote an essay on the house martin. *'the provident architect [builds] only in the morning and . . . gives it sufficient time to dry and harden'*

Colonial and sociable birds with their rather noisy chattering, house martins are engaging guests for the duration of the summer. In the early autumn, they gather with swallows on telephone wires for a few days before leaving on their long flight back to their wintering quarters in Africa.

In much of Europe they are seen as a good luck omen. Let's hope they continue to nest under the eaves and bring with them a blessing on the Chapel for many years to come.



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### Witchfinder!

Following a successful artist residency at the Chapel in December 2020, performance company Cohere Arts were thrilled to hear that they are to receive a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £39,400 to support the next stages of their project. As reported in the last newsletter, *Witchfinder* is a music theatre piece inspired by the activities of notorious character Matthew Hopkins. Hopkins was a self-proclaimed 'Witchfinder General' whose systematic campaign across East Anglia between 1644 and 1647 led to over 200 'witches' being condemned to death.





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Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, this stage of the project will invite community performers to bring the work to life in the form of an immersive audio drama, to be recorded on site within the Chapel buildings. Young people from Holton St Peter Primary School, members of Halesworth community choir 'The Cut Choir' and visually impaired performers from theatre group Unscene Suffolk will work alongside a professional cast to make the audio recording during another 4-day residency in July 2021.

Once completed, the recorded performance will be shared in 'silent-disco' style covid-safe events at Ipswich Museum and Suffolk Archives' The Hold later this summer, and will also be made available online for audiences to enjoy. The team will also create a range of digital educational resources about Suffolk's witch finding history that will be made available on our website.

Commenting on the award, Amy Mallett, founder of Cohere Arts and writer/composer of *Witchfinder* said: "We are so grateful to have received this support thanks to National Lottery players. The pandemic may have limited live performance opportunities, but it has also inspired us to explore audio drama as a way of introducing people to this real-life tale of horror. We feel privileged to be able make the most of the unique atmosphere and acoustics of the Chapel and invite others to enjoy this too. Performing arts are such a fabulous way of connecting with our heritage and bringing these stories back to life."

You can find out more about *Witchfinder* by visiting their website: <http://www.coherearts.org>

## Ship's Mast - Update

In the March edition, we asked if any readers could help us find out more about the ship's mast that supports the Chapel's roof. Thank you to the two of you who contacted us, independently, to say you'd been told it had come from Yarmouth. This makes sense on two counts. First of all, Yarmouth was a significant shipping port at the time. Secondly, the congregation at Cookley and Walpole was one of a dozen or so that took its inspiration from the one established in Yarmouth by William Bridge in 1642. We can imagine close links between the two locations over the succeeding decades. We will investigate further, to see if more of this story can be 'unwrapped'!

## Contact information

Anne Thomas or Simon Weeks – Secretaries: 01986 784348 or [info@walpoleoldChapel.org](mailto:info@walpoleoldChapel.org)

To become a Friend of the Chapel: [friends@walpoleoldChapel.org](mailto:friends@walpoleoldChapel.org)

To donate on line: <http://easydonate.org/HCTE2>