



# Walpole Old Chapel - September 2022



## Repair and Conservation - Simon Weeks

Following confirmation of a grant of £54,126 from Historic England, our architect is now commissioning the works this money will pay for. We hope the following works will be carried out during the late summer and autumn:

- A measured survey of the building, which has not been done to date.
- A survey of the surface water drainage arrangements
- Cutting away sample areas of the external render to better understand the state of the structural timbers underneath
- Investigation of removal of the black tar paint from the plinth

When these investigatory works have been completed, we hope to be in a position to formally apply for Listed Building Consent for the main repair and conservation scheme. This will start with removing all the existing external render, which is failing badly. Any necessary repairs to the underlying timbers and infill can then be undertaken. Next, new laths will be fixed to the timbers to provide a suitable 'key' for the new render. This will be a traditional lime render, whose exact composition will be determined in discussion with experts in the field from Historic England.

Whilst obtaining Listed Buildings Consent will be a big step forwards, we are very much aware that we still need to secure the outstanding £200,000+ this scheme will cost. So, the trustees are delighted to announce that we have appointed Vicky Thompson to be our fundraising consultant for the next stages of the project.





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Vikki has 22 years experience of fundraising in the heritage and cultural sector. She started her career at the British Museum in their Friends' department, managing a programme of income generating events (including sleepovers in the museum for children) as well as having responsibility for member recruitment and legacy gifts. Vikki then spent 10 years at the Imperial War Museums as Head of Friends and Patrons, establishing and managing the IWM Patrons' scheme and managing a direct mail appeal to IWM Friends to raise £250,000 for part of the museum's new First World War Galleries. She was also responsible for onsite visitor donations and legacy gifts. Between 2014 and 2019 she was Head of Fundraising at War Memorials Trust with a focus on fundraising from trusts and foundations, major donors, legacies and an annual appeal. In this role she raised between £300,000 and £400,000 each year for core funding.

Vikki set up Vikki Thompson Consulting Ltd in 2019, a fundraising consultancy specialising in the heritage and cultural sector. Since it was founded she has raised more than £5.8 million for a range of clients including: Historic Chapels Trust; Christ Church Spitalfields; Bevis Marks Synagogue; Murston Old Church; All Saints Church, Allhallows, Kent; St Mary Magdalene in Newark; Brass Bands England; Leas Lift (a funicular cliff railway in Folkestone); Churnet Valley Railway; The Sime Gallery; the Soho Poly (a fringe theatre in central London); and the Heath Robinson Museum.

### 'Ride and Stride' - Paul Simmons

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September we shall be welcoming those who take part in the Suffolk Historic Churches Ride and Stride fundraising day. People have ridden in this in the last couple of years in support of the Chapel. If you would like to do so too, you'll see more information here: <https://shct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/>. You can download a sponsorship form from that webpage or we can let you have a hard copy if you contact us.

You don't have to cycle to the Chapel if you live outside the area, but can visit churches and chapels local to you, provided that you state on your form you are supporting Walpole Old Chapel. There is no need to be a good cyclist and certainly not a marathon one- it makes an enjoyable slow day out, with plenty of stops for refreshments!





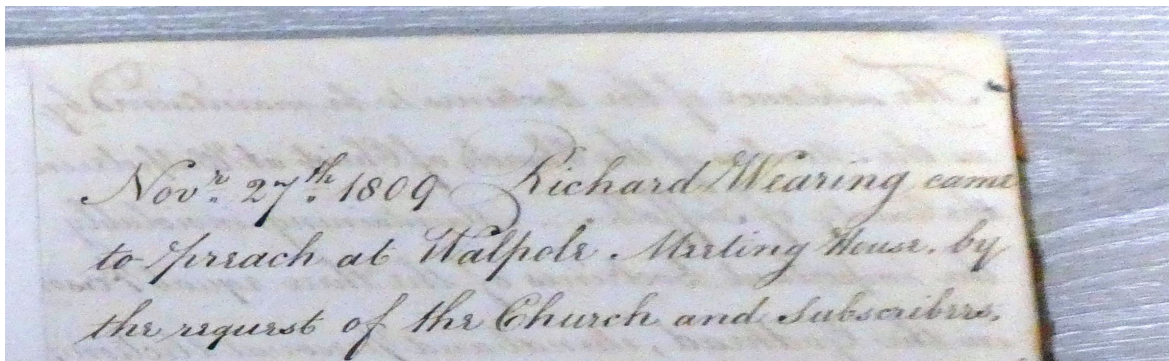
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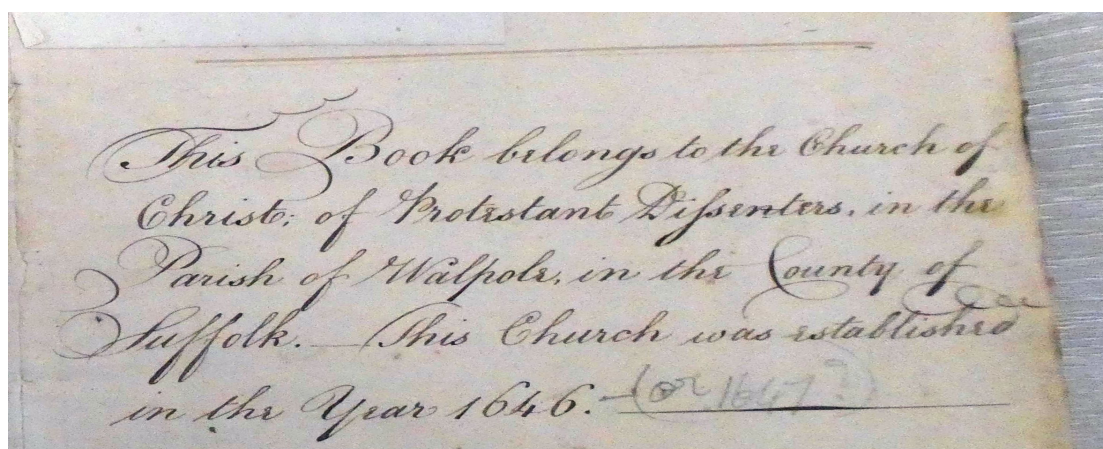
### What's in a Name? - Simon Weeks

We now know the Chapel as 'Walpole Old Chapel', but it has not always been referred to in this way. For example, the entry in the register of places of worship, held by the General Register Office, is 'The Independent Chapel, Walpole'. I wonder when that entry was made. The ability to register places of worship on a legally constituted central register goes back to the 1855 'Places of Worship Registration Act'.

However, if we go back to an earlier 'church book', this refers in 1809 to the Chapel as a 'meeting house.' And this may be how the building was known, even before it was converted from a farmhouse to a place of worship in c1690. During times of persecution under both Charles I and Charles II, non-conformists used literally to *meet* in secret in private *houses*.



Notice, in the entry above, that a distinction is made between the building (the Meeting House) and the people who worshipped there - the Church. At the time this church book was started, the congregation referred to themselves as 'The Church of Christ of Protestant Dissenters' (see below).



The first written reference we have to this church simply refers to the congregation as 'Ye Saints of Coukley'.



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### Veterans Cycle Club



The Chapel was delighted to host a brief visit by the Veterans Cycle Club this summer. The cyclists took a short break from their 1930s weekend - which involved sleeping under (real) canvas and cooking with primus stoves and billy cans - to see the Chapel and hear a short talk about its history. Chapel volunteers were slightly unsure whether 'veterans' referred to the bicycles, the riders or both, but the green bike on the right of the photo was made in 1910!

### Discovery Project, Oral History - Judith Condon

As one strand of the project to discover more of the history of Walpole Chapel and the people involved in it, it was decided to record individual memories and voices so that these can be preserved and made available to a wider audience. We hope and intend that this will include the local community, visitors, and anyone conducting historical research via the public records office and Halesworth Museum.

With the help of equipment loaned by the museum, this summer I have had the pleasant experience of conducting the first six of these interviews. Pauline Wilcock, the museum's chair and a member of the discovery project team, has undertaken the skilled task of transcribing the recordings using a template that enables future researchers more easily to locate material on particular aspects.



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Of course, oral history has its limitations and even hazards. We all know how memories alter or fade, and get transmuted over time; added to which, the process of recall can be highly subjective! However, individual recollections and accounts of particular experiences or moments often have a fascinating story to tell, and really do help bring history to life in a unique way.

Already we have recorded a range of valuable information that can be cross-referenced by other interviews, documents and records. We have learned details of families who were members of the chapel congregation; individuals who had particular roles in the local Independent church, such as deacon, or congregation secretary; services, Sunday school outings, and anniversaries; and crucial turning points in the preservation of the building.

One unplanned interview was conducted with a woman who happened to be visiting the chapel in search of clues to her family history on the very afternoon I was interviewing a builder who had worked on the cottage next to the chapel about his own discovery – a bricked up doorway below ground level that may or may not originally have formed the exit to a tunnel running from inside the chapel.

There are obviously a lot more stories to uncover, and further detail to enrich the format in which the outcomes of our discovery work are finally made available to the public. If having read this brief update, you feel you might have memories to contribute, or if you know of someone else we might consult, please contact us using the details at the end of this newsletter.

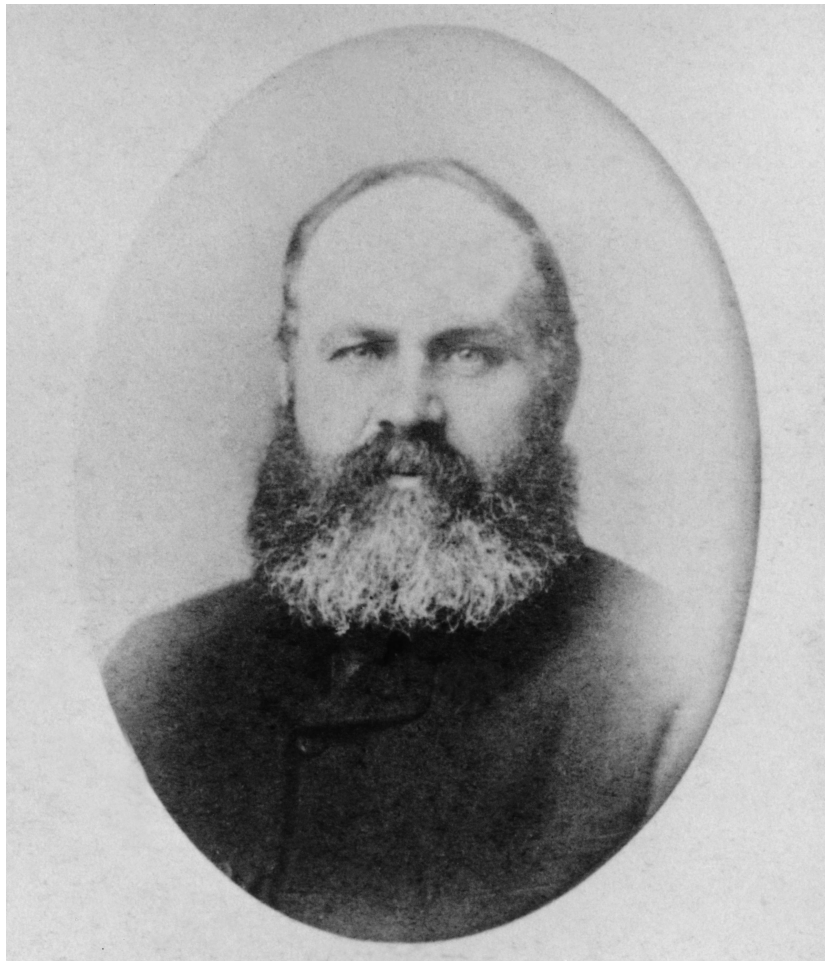
### Heritage Open Days, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> September - Simon Weeks

There is always a national 'theme' for the Heritage Open Days organised annually by The National Trust. This year's theme is 'Astounding Inventions'. We struggled to think of a way an Independent chapel in rural Suffolk could fit in with this theme, which seems to be tailor-made for heritage sites celebrating the industrial revolution. Struggled, that is, till a local resident reminded us of George Calver – master instrument maker of Walpole (1834 - 1927). George was the maker of top quality mirrors for telescopes. So good were they, that several 'Calver' telescopes are still in use today. After periods in Great Yarmouth and Widford, near Chelmsford, George Calver returned to Walpole in 1904, where he lived and worked till he died. His legacy lives on, not only in the instruments he made, but also in the charity set up in his name, which responds to local people in need or facing hardship to this day.

Please see a photo of George on the next page.



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George Calver - master instrument maker

### On Returning to The Chapel - JB

*"I finally made it! I girded up my loins and got to yesterday's concert, and am SO glad I did, it was like 'coming home', I realised just how much I had missed it, and what a beautiful concert it was for my return. My concerns re 'space' were unfounded, which was good for me, but sad for Chapel funds*

*It made me realise how much my Life has changed; pre pandemic I would have taken a friend and we would have met more friends there, those same friends - some now moved away, some in poor health, some lost contact, so much change in such a relatively short time, this is just 'me', and I suspect probably the case with many more folk and thus accounting for many empty seats.*

*I am now all fired up for more Concerts, I MAY make the next on a Saturday evening, but the Sunday one, which I would have so LOVED, is the day I will be travelling. Hey Ho, at least I have now 're-claimed' the Chapel and I WILL be returning as soon as I possibly can."*

Thank you, JB, for allowing us to reproduce your heartfelt words - ed.



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Trustees, Friends, Patrons, Volunteers, and Makers – Paul Simmons and Simon Weeks

The four trustees of the new CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) have been meeting together on zoom every 6 weeks or so. Simon Weeks is the Secretary, Lyn Banks the Treasurer and Lin le Versha has been managing the programme of public events in the Chapel, whilst Paul Simmons looks after the Friends' membership issues. The trustees all also contribute to the management of the charity in general - reviewing governance documents, preparing and updating the business plan, co-ordinating the repair and conservation activities (the Unwrapped project) and managing the finances.

We now have 35 Friends, who make up the membership of the charity. The Friends already provide valuable support to The Chapel through their subscriptions and additional donations. They will also have the chance to help decide the overall direction of the charity and vote for trustees at membership meetings. We are determined to build up the numbers of Friends, and to create ways for them to become more directly involved if they want to.

Our eight patrons provide much needed outside publicity about the Chapel and our work. Some were able to join Friends and volunteers at the launch of the public consultation on our plans for the Chapel earlier in the year.

We also have volunteers who are neither Friends, nor trustees, nor patrons, but who make a huge contribution by stewarding at our public open sessions on Saturday afternoons and other events at the Chapel. This vital role can also be very rewarding, as stewards get to meet a wide range of visitors, who value and are interested in the Chapel.

Finally, we have our Makers of crafts and produce sold at the Chapel. We are very fortunate to have so many talented Makers locally, who want to support the Chapel by donating part of their sales income.

We are grateful to everybody who supports the Chapel, and the charity, through one or more of these groups. It really is a collective effort that keeps the Chapel open and 'alive'. If you are not yet involved with the Chapel through one of these groups, and would like to find out more, please contact the Secretary.

If you belong to one of these groups - a date for your diary. We will be holding an 'end of season' get-together at the Chapel on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October. Invitations will be sent out soon and we hope to see you there.

[www.walpoleoldchapel.org](http://www.walpoleoldchapel.org)

[www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk)

[www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk)



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Dried flowers from a wedding adorn the balconies - Paul Simmons



## Contact information

Simon Weeks, Secretary: 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>

To contact the Discovery Project team: [discovery@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:discovery@walpoleoldchapel.org)

[www.walpoleoldchapel.org](http://www.walpoleoldchapel.org)

[www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk)

[www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk)