



# Walpole Old Chapel - March 2023



## Investigatory Works - The Trustees

The trustees would like to say a huge 'thank you' to the fantastic team of specialists who have been working through the winter, and often at very short notice, to complete the investigatory works on The Chapel requested (and funded) by Historic England. Commissioned by our project architect - Kirstie Robbins of Ptolemy Dean Architects, and co-ordinated by local main contractor - Will Nixon, an array of highly qualified and experienced specialists has descended on The Chapel at the right times and in the right order to carry out the required works in time for us to claim the grant.



A total of 12 sample areas of the render were 'opened up' to reveal the structural timbers underneath. The timbers were examined for their load-bearing capability by Ed Morton - structural engineer. They were analysed and recorded by archaeological historian - Alison Dickens, and samples were taken, for dating, by dendrochronologist - Martin Bridge. Also on site was scientific timber analyst - Tim Floyd, who carried out micro drilling to establish the depth of 'sound' timber where the external face had decayed. Sarah Morrison - conservation architect from Historic England, also visited to see the opened up areas and discuss their findings with the various specialists at work.

So, what did they find? One of the most obvious things was the variety of different materials used to infill between the structural timbers. The photos below illustrate that variety. Some panels are infilled with bricks, on edge, laid on a very sandy bedding. Other panels were filled with 'pole and cob' - vertical hazel poles, bound in an earth mortar. Some panels show this same technique used in the restoration work of 1993. One panel, rather alarmingly, had no infill at all!



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The other thing which was obvious straight away, is that some of the timbers are in a fairly poor state, as illustrated in the lower right image above. In itself, it is not necessarily too much of a problem if the external face of a structural timber is decayed, so long as there is still sufficient sound timber behind the decay. This is where the results of the micro drilling will be very important.

The reports by all the specialists are now coming in. Kirstie will have the task of assimilating the new information and working out what the implications are for the nature and cost of the main repair and conservation work.

In the meantime, the 'making good' will offer the chance to try out different types of infill, lath and render, to see what combination(s) might work best for re-rendering the whole of The Chapel. The making good will be taking place at the end of March, to coincide with the visit of Fellows and Scholars of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (see further information on this below).



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## The Historic Chapels Trust

In the December newsletter we published a statement from Chris Smith, Chairman of the Historic Chapels Trust – the owner of Walpole Old Chapel, about the future of the HCT and its chapels. At that time it was not clear whether Walpole would receive any of the £3.6m grant HCT secured for repairs to its chapels. Nor was it clear who might take over the ownership of Walpole Old Chapel, nor when. Things have moved forward a little, and we are now expecting a visit this month from members of the team that is developing proposals/options for HCT in relation to the disposal of its chapels.

## Carols and Readings by Candlelight

Thank you to the 140+ people who came to the carol service on 17<sup>th</sup> December and donated £465. It was great to see the Chapel so full and lively. Apologies to people who missed out on the mince pies and mulled apple juice – we had only catered for 120 people. We'll do better this year!





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### SPAB Visit - Simon Weeks

At the end of March, Walpole Old Chapel will be hosting a working visit by the Fellows and Scholars of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. This is something of an honour for us as SPAB is very highly regarded in the world of buildings conservation.

However, the visit will have more importance to the Chapel than just a symbolic endorsement of its national status. The Fellows and Scholars will be giving their views on some of the technical challenges and options faced by our design team. They will also be rolling up their sleeves and joining in with the work of making good the sample areas that have been opened up.

The trustees would like to thank those local residents who offered to accommodate the Fellows and Scholars.

### Coronation Volunteering - The 'Big Help Out'

Readers may well be aware that, as a part of the coronation activities, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May has been designated as a day when people are encouraged to give their time by volunteering for a worthy cause. Well, guess what - we think that Walpole Old Chapel is a worthy cause, and we are offering people the opportunity to help out at The Chapel on that day.



We will be at The Chapel from 10.00am till 4.00pm, trying to deal with the brambles, which have become a real problem. All you'll need is a hand fork and a pair of stout gloves.

The chapel yard is a rare remnant of 'herb-rich grassland' and the brambles need to be removed. They cannot be sprayed due to the sensitive nature of the grassland, and they cannot just be cut back as they'll come again with renewed vigour. So, we will be hand pulling, getting out as much of the roots as possible.



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## Looking Forward to Events in 2023 - Lin le Versha

We are thrilled to announce our 2023 Summer Programme. We are sure you will find an event that appeals to you, whether you like classical music, folk, poetry, period instruments or talks. You may pre-book your tickets on Ticket Source on the Walpole Old Chapel section from the end of March (£10 concerts; £7 talks) or buy them on the door (Concerts £12; talks £8).

Sunday 14th May 3pm - The Company of Horham Old School - 15 folk musicians

Sunday 21st May 3pm - Spanish and Italian music performed on the Vihuela

Sunday 28th May 3pm - Baroque solos and sonatas by Follia Duo - flute, recorder & harpsichord

Sunday 4th June 3pm - Harpsichord recital

Sunday 11th June 3pm - Gainsborough Quartet with Rob Gildon

Wednesday 14th June - Kings Singers - Part of the Aldeburgh Festival

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June 3pm - Hexachordia

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 3pm - Suffolk Poetry Society - Members readings

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 3pm - Walpole Old Chapel: A turning point in English history - a talk by Rev'd Bill Mahood

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 7pm - Syzewell Gap - folk music and dancing

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 7pm - Blake Morison and the Hosepipe band - poetry set to music

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August 3pm - Crumhorn quartet

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August 7pm - Julian Godlee - bass, Brenda Blewett - piano

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> August 3pm - The A-Z of Curious Suffolk - A talk by Sarah Doig

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 3pm - The Soane Duo - Romantic music with period instruments

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September - Heritage Open Days - 'Inspired by Walpole Old Chapel'

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 3pm - Carol Service

The Chapel will be open for visitors from 2.00pm till 4.30pm on Saturday afternoons and Bank Holidays from the 7<sup>th</sup> of April to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September (with the exception of the 6<sup>th</sup> of May)



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## Methuselah Spalding

Our community history ('Discovery') project has been fortunate to establish a good relationship with the history department at the University of East Anglia and, particularly with Dr. Joel Halcomb – specialist in the history of Non-Conformism. We were delighted when he suggested that The Chapel and Halesworth Museum might provide a research placement for MA students. We have one student on placement with us at the moment and he has chosen to carry out his research on Methuselah Spalding, whose children were all baptised at The Chapel. The bare bones we knew of from the start are that Methuselah parted from his wife and children and went to London, where he was arrested and tried for having what we would now call a gay relationship. He was hanged in 1803. We hope the research will tell us more about his particular case, as well as about prevailing attitudes and the legal system at the time.

## Annual General Meeting – the trustees

And now for the exciting stuff! As a new charity, The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel is required to hold its first general meeting within 15 months of being registered, and that time is coming around. We are pleased to announce that the meeting will be held at **4.30pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June**, in The Chapel. Everyone is welcome to attend. And there is still plenty of time to register as a Friend if you wish to vote on motions in the meeting. Please see contact details for joining The Friends below.

## 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)