



Walpole Old Chapel - September 2024



Future Ownership of The Chapel

We are pleased to report that good progress has been made in discussions with the Historic Chapels Trust about The Friends taking on ownership of The Chapel. We have now signed a memorandum of understanding/intent, in which The Friends set out our intent to take on The Chapel, and HCT pledges its support to help raise the funds for the repairs. If all goes well, we expect the transfer to take place in around October 2025, after the repair work has been completed.

Autumn Glory





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Fundraising for the Repairs - Simon Weeks

First of all, we would like to thank all the local people and charities who have already responded to our appeal by donating funds and by writing letters of support. We currently have £42,000 in funds designated for the repairs - all raised locally, which is a very strong signal to national donors of how highly valued The Chapel is.

With support from HCT and their consultants - Tricolor Associates, we have now started writing applications to larger, national organisations. Having already funded the 'investigatory' works in 2023, Historic England have encouraged us to apply for a substantial grant towards the main contract costs. We are writing this application at the moment and hope to submit it late this month or early in October.

We have a similar timetable for applying for a National Lottery Heritage Fund 'small' capital grant of up to £250,000. Applications are also being written to two private charitable trusts - The Wolfson Foundation and Garfield Weston.

Finally, it seems possible that Walpole will, after all, receive a contribution from the £3.6m that the Historic Chapels Trust was awarded by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, though we don't currently know how much this could be. We believe this depends on the progress of the projects this funding has already been committed on at other chapels.

In the best-case scenario, if all these applications are successful, we should have sufficient funds to complete all the required repair and conservation work in one go, and in one season. If some of these applications are unsuccessful, we may need to phase the work over two seasons, with further fundraising alongside the phase one work. We hope to be able to confirm which way it will go in our December newsletter.

In the meantime, you can still contribute by clicking on the Donate button below or scanning the campaign QR code.



Electronic fundraising, payments and donations will be processed and administered by the National Funding Scheme (Charity No: 1149800), operating as DONATE. Texts will be charged at your standard network rate. For Terms & Conditions, see www.easydonate.org



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Graffiti in The Chapel - Chris Wheeler

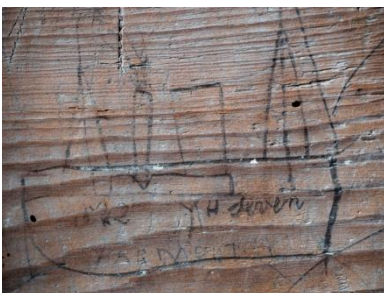
Modern graffiti can be a very divisive subject but there is a long history of graffiti in religious buildings, particularly on masonry but also on the wood of pews and benches. The graffiti around the Chapel is part of this history, although most of it is personal rather than having any religious significance. As part of the Discovery Project, I been photographing this graffiti and so far, I have identified well over 100 different items. These range from simple initials (and in one case a full name!) to drawings of ships and a more detailed pencil drawing of a named local boat. Most of the items are carved in the wood but a number are in pencil and there is even one in felt pen.



I have been mapping the locations of the graffiti around the Chapel. The greatest concentration is in the back left-hand corner of the gallery behind the view from the pulpit. There are also several along the painted front edge of the gallery right in front of the pulpit - people were not afraid of being seen!



The most common items of graffiti are initials, ranging from very carefully carved ones complete with serifs to more commonly simple scratched letters or pencil marks. H J Heffer was not shy carving his name in full on the back of the rail at the top of the right-hand stairs.



There are three ship drawings, two of which appear to show crude representations of 19th century sailing ships. The third ship is a more detailed drawing of an early 20th century steam ketch. This has the name YH Seven written in it. The YH542 Seven appears in the 1913 mariner's almanac as a steam screw ketch fishing out of Yarmouth. The boat is listed as having a crew of 10 - was one of these or a family member in the congregation of the chapel?

Dating the graffiti items is not easy, apart from those that give a date, the most visible being 1850 and another marked 1950. I hope that given some more research I may be able to date a few more. I suspect the most recent is the red felt pen mark on the right-hand gallery rail!

Work on the graffiti is continuing. Every time I go to the chapel I find more to photograph and looking at the images I have brings new insights every time. Searching images to write this article led to me identifying YH Seven.

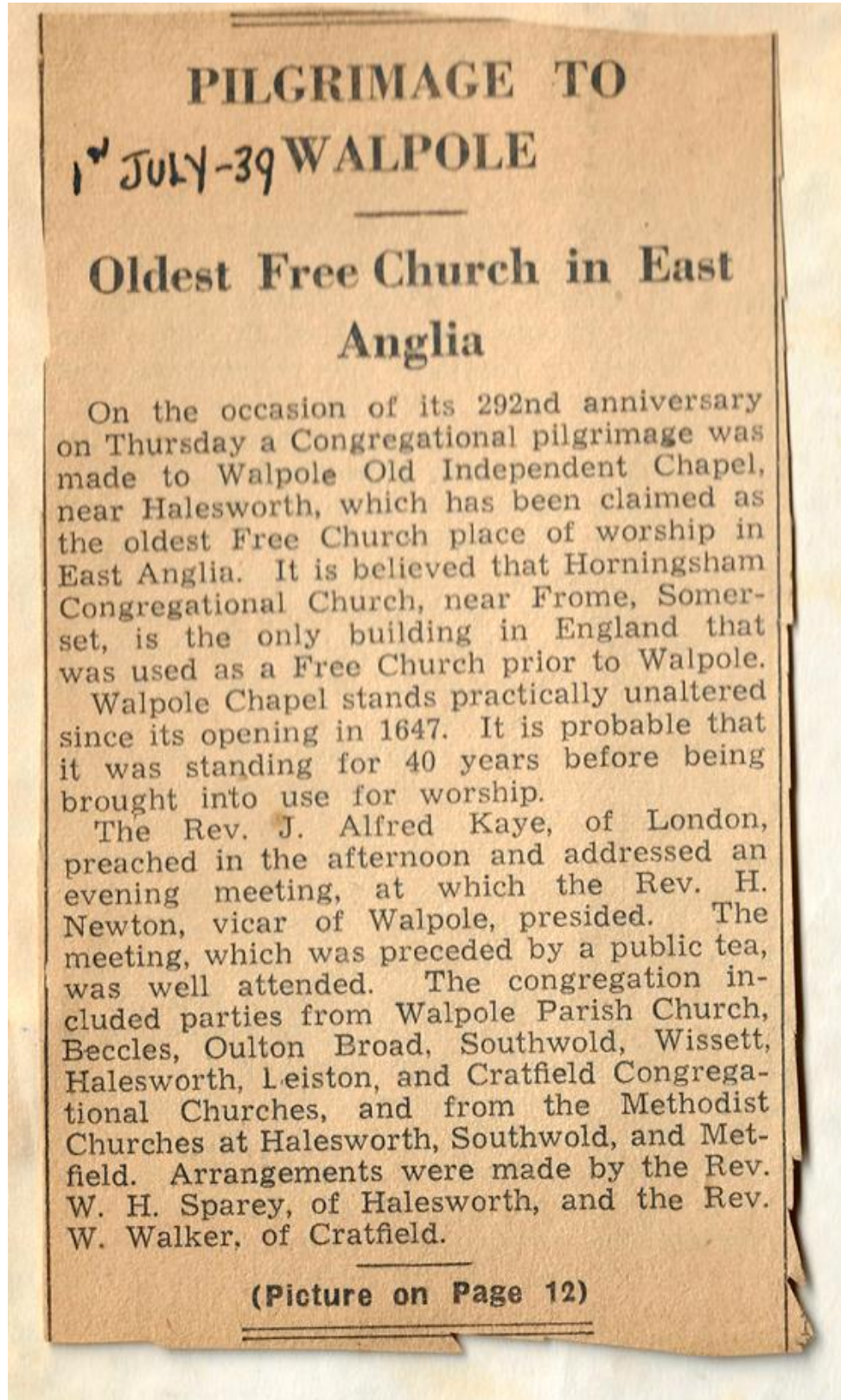
There will be a display of the work so far at the Heritage Open weekend on 14th and 15th September.



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Pilgrimage to Walpole Old Chapel





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Tendering for Contractors

On the assumption that we will raise sufficient funds to at least carry out a first phase of repairs next year, we have started the process of tendering for contractors. Over 15 firms were contacted to see if they were interested and over 50% of them expressed their interest. Pre-qualifying questionnaires have been sent to those who are interested and, although a few have since pulled out, we are still hopeful that a group of suitable contractors will be established to enable a competitive tender to be undertaken in October/November.

We aim to have completed the tendering process by the end of this calendar year, to roughly coincide with the timescale for finding out the outcomes of our grant applications. So, we should know well in advance of when work could start on-site (late March or April 2025) how much of The Chapel could be re-rendered next year, and who would be carrying out the work. Fingers crossed!

Heritage Open Days and Ride & Stride

Just a quick reminder that The Chapel will be open for the whole of the weekend 14th & 15th September. We hope to see you then.

The Friends

Currently we have 69 Friends who kindly contribute to the everyday costs of running the Chapel. Their funds, along with contributions from visitors and events held in the Chapel, are our sole source of income to keep the Chapel open. (Our conservation and repair fund ('Walpole Unwrapped') is separate from this).

Would you like to join our Friends and be part of our community? We have recently revamped our subscription levels and you could join us for just £2 per month! Please email friends@walpoleoldchapel.org for more information.

Contact information

Simon Weeks, Secretary - 01986 784348 or info@walpoleoldchapel.org

To become a Friend of the Chapel - friends@walpoleoldchapel.org

To contact the Discovery Project team - discovery@walpoleoldchapel.org