



Walpole Old Chapel - September 2025



A summer full of good news

It's been an amazing summer for the Chapel. In this newsletter we report on the excellent progress being made by Cliveden Conservation in repairing the north and west-facing walls of the building. The works meant we could not hold any cultural events this year. But help was at hand: a superb evening of *Words and Music* at The Cut in Halesworth on 12 July, organised by Rob Gildon raised nearly £2,500 for Chapel funds. At the AGM in July, formal approval was given for our Charity to take over ownership of the Chapel from the Historic Chapels Trust in the new year. The generosity of the Friends, volunteers and local communities who support Walpole with their time as well as their money is a significant factor in giving the Trustees confidence that we shall be able to look after the Chapel in the future. To help us, HCT announced a special appeal for Walpole Old Chapel in its April newsletter to supporters. The appeal has raised £10,724 so far, which is wonderful news.

Restoration 1 – repairs, replacements and a new coat

Having stripped the cement render off the west and north walls, the team from Cliveden Conservation faced the challenge of repairing or restoring what remains of the C17th oak timbers, wattle and daub infilling, and nineteenth century brickwork. On the north elevation, Victorian repairs at ground-floor level have created a buttress effect while the first-floor elevation and the gables continue leaning in towards the Chapel interior.

Over the last two months, Cliveden's specialists have been working exceptionally hard to repair the west and north walls of the Chapel, using building materials and techniques that respect the historic importance of the building. The four photographs overleaf demonstrate how this has been achieved. The top left image shows the corner of the west and north elevations at first floor level. The corner post was severely compromised by beetles munching their way through the timber, so a new English oak post has been cut in to provide vertical support.

The void on the west face, where the original wattle and daub had failed, is now filled with a framework of new hazel poles sourced from a supplier in Saffron Walden and held in place with orange twine. New daub has been made on site from locally sourced clay, sand and barley straw. Historically, cattle dung would have been added but twenty-first century health and safety regulations trumped historical authenticity on this occasion. Finally, the photo shows how new oak timber batons have strengthened the frame supporting new laths which will be used as base for the application of the lime render. Further examples are shown in photos 3 and 4.

Photo 2 shows the next stages in re-wrapping the Chapel once more. The team have experimented with different recipes to create the lime render needed to protect the building. The final choice consists of 1 part quicklime to 2 parts sand, to 0.25 parts of stone-dust, mixed with 1lb of goat hair and water. An unforgettable fact about the render: quicklime is the material used historically to lime corpses in plague pits because it dissolves bodies very quickly: it is



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difficult to work with because it attacks the goat hair when it is wet.

The King's Trust apprentice who is working on site with Cliveden told me how much he was enjoying working with the lime render because "it feels alive". Photo 2 shows the two scratch coats of lime render applied to the laths and the third smooth coat which is now ready for two coats of lime wash when the north elevation is at the same stage of readiness.



Top left [1]: repair stages prior to application of lime render scratch coat, west/north elevation corner.

Top right [2]: three coats of lime render and window repair, west elevation.

Bottom left [3]: work in progress, plinth cleaned and repointed, laths applied, lead flashing to protect new oak window frame, west elevation.

Bottom right [4]: insertion of thicker gauge oak timbers and laths to reduce concavity of first floor north elevation.

The project is due to be completed by the end of October 2025.



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Restoration 2 – Words and Music at the Cut, 12 July 2025



From left to right: Rob Gildon, Nathan Williamson, John Myerscough, Charmian Bedford, Madeleine Holmes, Julia Blackburn, Olivia Laing and Lucy Hughes-Hallett.

The Chapel is so lucky to have Rob Gildon, the international opera singer and educator who has a home in Suffolk, as one of our Patrons. Knowing the Chapel could not host any events this year, Rob persuaded a stellar cast of singers, musicians and authors, to join him on the stage of The Cut in Halesworth, for an evening of varied entertainment on the theme of *Restoration*. Rob (baritone), Charmian Bedford and Madeleine Holmes (sopranos) performed a varied programme of songs ranging from Henry Purcells' *Evening Hymn* to Ralph Vaughan Williams *It was a lover* to John Dankworth's arrangement of *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day*.

Musicians John Myerscough (cello) and Nathan Williams (piano) played Gabriel Fauré's *Romance* for the hushed audience. Interspersed were appropriately themed pieces of prose read by three notable authors who also have homes in Suffolk. Julia Blackburn read extracts from two of her books *Threads* and *The Emperor's Last Island*; Olivia Laing read from her *The Lonely City* and *The Garden against Time* her latest book about the restoration of a walled garden in Suffolk. Lucy Hughes-Hallett read from her 2017 novel *Peculiar Ground* in which she 'illuminates a place where past and present are inextricably linked by stories, legends, and history—and by one patch of peculiar ground'.¹

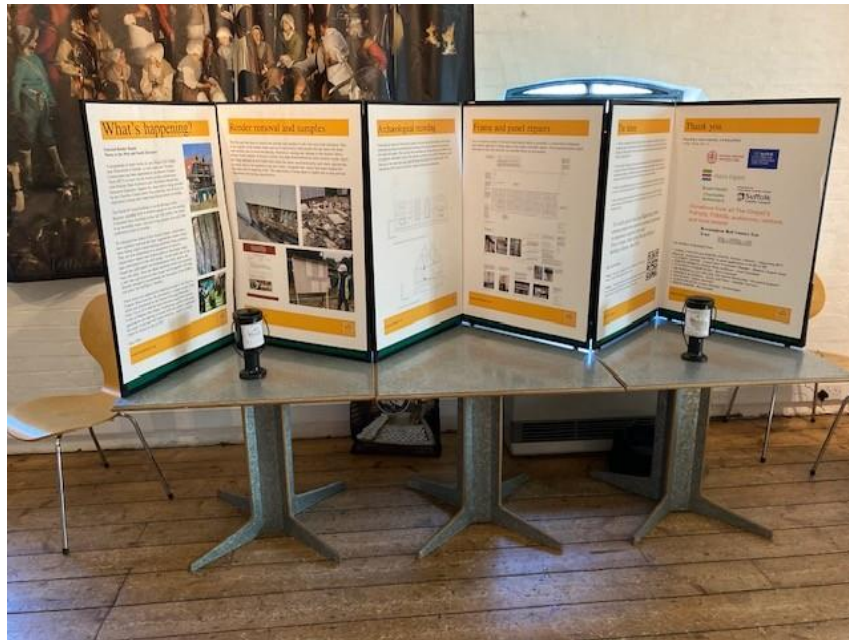
¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34950861-peculiar-ground>



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It was wonderful to see a full house for the evening's entertainment. The programme was received with great enthusiasm by the audience, many of whom stayed behind to look at the exhibition prepared by FWOC and Cliveden Conservation about the 2025 repairs to the Chapel and talk to the Trustees. Some people signed up to receive our Newsletter while others joined the Friends and some made generous donations to the restoration fund. In total, £2,415 was raised to support the work.



We would like to thank the performers for so generously giving their time to support us. And many thanks to Lin le Versha, one of the FWOC Trustees, who was closely involved throughout the planning and hosting of the evening. Finally, we would like to thank East Suffolk Council for a generous grant that enabled us to purchase the travelling display boards and posters to help us promote the *Unwrapped* project.

Looking after our bats

Anyone looking closely at the repair work being done to the north elevation of the Chapel might be wondering what is happening in the gable eaves. Cliveden are installing specialist vents as access points for any bats who choose to roost in the roof spaces between the tiles and the ceiling boards. The presence of bats, a protected species under nature conservation legislation, was first established by Philip Parker Associates, who carried out surveys in 2021 and 2023 as part of the submission to East Suffolk Council for permission to proceed with the repairs to the Chapel which is a Grade II* listed building.

In 2021, sightings were recorded of two common pipistrelle bats emerging from under a roof tile close to the south-eastern elevation of the building. During the preliminary investigative work done in early 2023, crawling boards were fitted which meant the ecologists could inspect the



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entire roof space in more detail in September 2023. Fresh, brown long-eared bat droppings were observed on the crawling boards and small accumulations of droppings suggested one or more bats were roosting in the roof space. In August 2024, a brown long-eared bat was seen emerging from behind the chimney and a pipistrelle left via the eaves of the west elevation. It pleases the Editor of the Newsletter that we may not have a belfry but the Chapel provides a home for a few, hopefully non-conforming bats!

Judith Condon describes her recent research on Alma Gould Dale



Alma Gould, ca1880. T.A. Lord, Royal Art Studio, Uxbridge, Ontario. USMA

In researching the life of the Quaker minister Alma Gould Dale, who was buried in the graveyard of Walpole Chapel in 1930, I consulted various Canadian sources, mainly Canadian Quaker journals, for details of her fascinating early life and ministry. I also sent a letter to the address given by a visitor to Walpole Chapel on 28 September 1985. Mrs Alice Brown had written in the Chapel's Visitor Book that she was Alma's great-great niece. Unsurprisingly, I had no reply.

Another avenue was to check the website of the Society of Friends in Uxbridge, Ontario – Alma Gould Dale's hometown, where she was born into a prominent Quaker family. In August 2023, I sent off an email introducing myself, with an outline of the Walpole Chapel Discovery project, explaining my interest in Alma Gould Dale and my research so far. I attached a photograph provided by Tony Gillett from the 20 years when Alma lived at Walpole Hatch Farm. For many months I heard nothing. But later, returning to the website, I found that a video of a gathering in the Meeting House in June 2023 had been added. This was commemorating the building's 214th anniversary. I watched it with great interest and was not disappointed. At the end of the meeting, when the speaker thanked the ushers, my ears pricked up. Russ and Isabel Gould! Surely a family connection with Alma?



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I followed up by sending my now completed article about Alma. In October 2024 an answer finally arrived. Russ Gould, a trustee, apologised for the delay, but explained that when you get to 87, “everything takes a little longer.” He was very grateful for the article which included much more information about Alma than he had known, including that she was the key mover in the transition from silent worship and establishment of the role of minister.

From a list he sent of his ancestors on the Gould side, I could see that Russell’s great-grandfather was Alma’s eldest brother Isaac, which means they share a great-great-grandfather, Joseph Gould. The commitment to the local Society of Friends has clearly passed down through generations of the Gould family. Further emails established that Alice Brown of Windsor, Ontario, who visited the Chapel in 1985 with her husband Donovan, was Russell’s first cousin. She was now deceased but I am hoping that the family may be able to find photos of her taken beside Alma’s grave in our chapel yard.

In April 2025, Russell sent me a portrait photograph of Alma Gould Dale and a brochure about the Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House. There are certain parallels with the history of Walpole Chapel. The original Uxbridge meeting house, built in 1809, was a log construction, with land on the other side of the road for a burial ground. In 1817 certain Friends were appointed to provide boards and funds for a replacement building which was completed in 1820. An interior partition created separate areas for women and men but this was removed in 1881, at a time when the ‘great separation’ of Friends occurred in Canada. The Uxbridge Quakers were on the more liberal side of the schism and this was the time when Alma was taking her first steps into ministry.

The meeting house, the oldest surviving building in Uxbridge, clearly needed structural attention when it was lifted in 1995 for a concrete block foundation to be installed. It has subsequently been renovated but retains its simple beauty. In fact, from photographs, the interior seems to be painted in the same colour as the current inside boarding of Walpole Chapel.

Russell wrote, “This year’s AGM will be interesting since we have been trying to secure clear “title” to the building and property that dates back to 1809. The trustees listed on this antique document are obviously no longer with us and the whole exercise has been a challenge.” I’m sure the current trustees of Walpole Chapel can identify with that! I have told Russell something about our trustees’ challenges and our restoration project. He replied warmly and signed off, “Best wishes on your fund raising and what you have taken on. I’m sure it will all be worth it.”

It has been immensely gratifying to have made this connection through Alma Gould Dale across such a great distance.

Ed. Note – Judith’s research on Alm Gould Dale can be found on the WOC website. Search under the *History* tab.



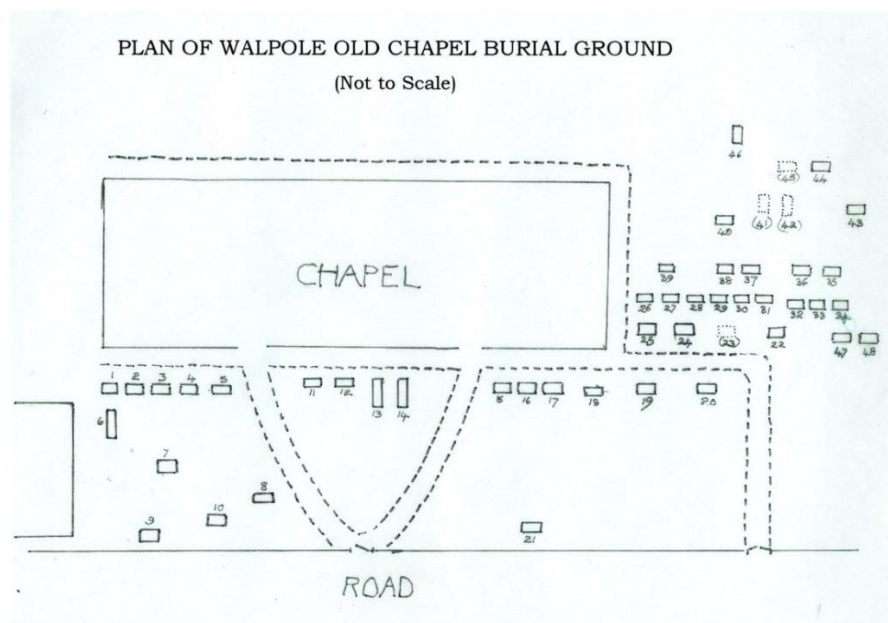
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Walpole Old Chapel burial ground, gravestones and roses



Regular readers will remember the article by Anne Thomas about the *Tuscany* rambling rose cuttings she has nurtured over the last year. Two members of the professional team supporting the *Unwrapped* project have purchased cuttings as living mementoes of their involvement with the Chapel. But who planted the original rose? Perhaps we might learn more from the work of other Discovery project volunteers who surveyed the Chapel burial ground back in 2021.



Map of the Chapel burial ground (not to scale) prepared by Alison Peet and Victor Gray.



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Alma Gould Dale's grave is number 24 on the plan above: it is marked by a half-size headstone with the simple inscription ALMA DALE, 1854-1930. In spring 2021, Alison Peet and Victor Gray mapped the location of the 48 graves in the chapel yard, recording the inscriptions which commemorate 67 individuals and taking photographs of the condition of as many of the headstones as possible. (A new copy of the study is available to consult in the Chapel).

Rosa Tuscan grows close to the main path leading to the Chapel door by the grave numbered 14 on the plan. Five members of the Goodwin family, who came from Sibton, are buried in graves 11-14, including the son and daughter of John and Sarah Goodwin [11, 12] and John's widowed mother Betsy [13] all of whom died in 1840s. The coffin grave [14] contains the remains of John who died in 1857, and his wife Sarah who died in 1879. Could the rose have been planted by Sarah as a family memorial?

Meanwhile Simon wonders if there could be a connection between the Sibton Goodwins and the radical Puritan preacher and writer John Goodwin who was closely associated with Cromwell and the Independent cause. *The* John Goodwin was born in Norfolk and educated at Cambridge, so there is apparently an East Anglian branch of the family. Could the coffin tombs and the *Tuscan* rose be some sort of homage to an illustrious family line of Independents? Is this a genealogical challenge that somebody might like to take up?

AGM - 5th July 2025

This year the Friends of Walpole Old Chapel held their Annual General Meeting in the Walpole Pavillion. Fourteen Friends and Trustees attended the meeting to receive the Annual Report. The annual accounts for the year 2024/2025 were formally approved, as was the aim of the Trustees to take over the ownership of the Chapel from HCT in early 2026. Reports on the business plan, the Discovery Project and the 2024 public events programme all generated interesting discussions which have been recorded in the Minutes. Finally, the appointment of Simon Weeks and Jacquie Burgess as Trustees was approved by the meeting. The formal business of the AGM was helped along with plentiful cups of tea and large slices of Ruth Simmons' excellent cake!

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