



Walpole Old Chapel - December 2025



Carol Service



The first phase of conservation work to protect the Chapel has been completed in good time for us to hold our atmospheric candlelight service of **Carols and Readings for Christmas** on **Saturday 13th December, starting at 3 pm.**

Walpole Old Chapel is on the B117, two miles southwest of Halesworth. Free car parking is available opposite the Chapel. There is a free community bus for up to 15 people leaving from Halesworth Co-op and 15 people from Walpole Pavilion. Please see the last page of the Newsletter for further information.



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Walpole Old Chapel Unwrapped – one chapter closes ...

The 2025 work to conserve those parts of the Chapel most at risk has been funded by the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Additional support has come from the local communities of East Suffolk, and national supporters of the Historic Chapels Trust [HCT]. The west and north sides of the Chapel are now fully repaired, and the Chapel is ready for our Christmas *Carols by Candlelight* service on Saturday 13th December.

Regular readers of the Newsletter will know how painstaking the repairs to the two elevations have been since the project started in April 2025. The final stages during the autumn included completion of fitting new laths to the north wall while the three coats of lime render applied to the west elevation were left to set. The north wall was then given its three coats of lime render, and sacking was hung from the scaffolding to allow it to dry. This is taking longer as the weather has turned autumnal but damp conditions help the lime render set properly. Two coats of lime wash, in a pale sandy colour chosen by the HCT and approved by the East Suffolk Conservation officer, were applied to both elevations during late October and early November.



The Chapel window frames have been repaired using new oak timbers whenever necessary, broken panes replaced, and the leaded beading on the windows of the west elevation replaced where it has failed. The photo on the right was taken shortly after the final coat of limewash applied to the west elevation was beginning to dry to HCT's preferred light sandy colour. The 'bijou bat entrances', finished off with an oak perch to allow for easy entrance and exit, can be seen in both gables of the north elevation. The windows have been repaired and the



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three coats of lime render applied. The brick plinth supporting both west and north elevations has been stripped of its old bitumen, rotten bricks have been replaced and the walls have been repointed. Chamfered red bricks have replaced the old broken tiles and help remove surface rainwater from the walls. The result is spectacular: the Chapel walls cannot have looked this good for many, many decades and it is reassuring to know that hessian strips will be used to protect the north wall from frost and snow during the winter.



Miriam Stead writes about the 2025 Heritage Open Days at the Chapel

Walpole Old Chapel participated once more in Heritage Open Days. This year the theme was Buildings and Architecture, which was a very apposite choice for us as we were immersed in major conservation works to two facades of the building. We were also fortunate to receive a grant of £500 from East Suffolk Council, which they offered to heritage organisations in the district to encourage them to take part in HODS. The grant was used to purchase a set of display boards and for the professional production of an exhibition about the building and its conservation. These have the advantage of being portable and reusable and we thank East Suffolk for their valuable support for small local groups. We opened on Saturday 13th and Saturday 20th September. Saturday 13th was also the 'Ride & Stride Day', which raises funds for the Historic Churches Trust. We had 88 visitors over both these sessions.



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I was there helping on Saturday 13th in the afternoon, alongside Alison Peet. It was a bit of a dark day and toward the end of the afternoon it got very wet and thundery. Groups of cyclists descended on us and dived inside to miss getting drenched. Most of them had just visited St Mary's Church in Walpole village, where they had drunk tea, so declined our offer of refreshments. The highlight of our afternoon was a group of 8 cyclists who turned out to be part of a choir and whilst avoiding a downpour took up our invitation to test the fine acoustics of the Chapel with some beautiful *a Capella* singing which Alison captured on video. Sadly we can only show you a still photo of what was a very special moment!



GREAT NEWS! – FWOC wins a Development Phase grant from the Heritage Fund



The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel heard in October that the Heritage Fund had awarded the charity £96,332, made possible thanks to National Lottery players. The grant gives us time and the ability to pay for professional support in developing a capital works programme together with business and activity plans. Once the plans are complete, FWOC will be able to apply for a Delivery Phase grant of £900,000 to complete the work. The goals are to ensure the building will be removed from Historic

England's heritage-at-risk Register and to make sure the range of cultural and religious activities being planned for the Chapel will generate sufficient income to protect its future. Early discussions with our Heritage Fund advisors have started and we shall have more to report in the March 2026 Newsletter. But please do keep looking at the *news* tab of our website for more immediate information. www.walpoleoldchapel.org



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Now this is interesting ...



We always need interesting photographs for Walpole Old Chapel's social media feeds and your Editor feels sure this image of FWOC's esteemed Secretary Simon Weeks (second left) contemplating the new cast iron rainwater goods has a good story to tell.

The Chapel was built in 1689 almost a century before the start of the Industrial Revolution and its gutters, water hoppers, downpipes, drains and soak-aways have been adequate for prevailing weather conditions. But the plastic gutters and drain pipes on the west wall and the pipe carrying water down from the hopper draining the roof gully have aged. Should they be replaced like-for-like or would it be better to future-proof the building against changing climatic conditions?

The advice issued for Listed Buildings by Historic England is clear.¹ Upgrade your rainwater system if possible. It needs to be well-designed and adequately sized because winter rainfall is likely to increase by 33% over the century, with more frequent winter storms combining high wind speeds with higher levels of rainfall.

Readers may remember the storms which battered Suffolk over the winter of 2023-4, for example. The west elevation of the Chapel is especially vulnerable to future wind-driven storms of rain as they will most likely track in from the west, the south-west and the south of the UK.

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/resilient-rainwater-systems/>



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The HCT approved the proposal to fit new cast iron gutters and drain pipes on both walls of the Chapel. The gutters that have now been fitted to new fascia boards along the west elevation are extra deep 6" plain half round gutters with an internal diameter of just under 4". The cast iron hopper draining the roof gully on the north gable has been renovated and fitted to a new oak backboard. The drains have been cleared, and the Chapel is now ready to face the winter.

New Marriage and Baptism Registers created for the Chapel, by Lin le Versha

On 4th May 2021 the registration process for marriages changed, the most significant update since 1837. The move from a paper marriage register to an electronic register and certificate also allowed the names of both parents, not just the father, to be recorded on the marriage certificate. However, it meant there was no record of those who had chosen to celebrate their union in Walpole Old Chapel, so we decided to create our own marriage register.

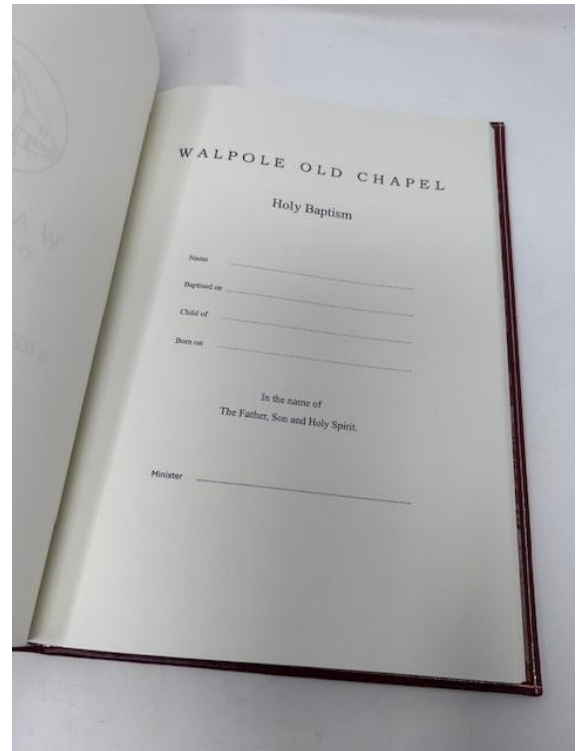
We commissioned Matt Pilling of Owl Bookbinding in Stonham Aspel, Suffolk to produce a leather-bound book which recorded the date and included the signatures of those getting married, their witnesses, the minister and the authorised person registering the marriage as a permanent record held in the Chapel.² After a baptism in 2025, we asked Matt to produce a similar book to ensure we hold records for future generations who wish to trace their ancestors celebrating key life events at the Chapel.



² Matt Pilling, Bookbinder (Director), Owl Bookbinding Ltd, [Tel:01449 710401](tel:01449710401) / 07795 420063, www.owlbookbinding.co.uk



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Matt loved books and his first job was printing them before becoming a bookbinder. "Rare or mass produced, the books that come to me for repair mean something to the people who bring them, so it's rewarding to hand them back in a better state than they arrived. Producing new books from someone's initial thoughts to producing the finished item is also very satisfying."

The process of creating these unique books by hand employs tools and techniques familiar to bookbinders in the past. The printed sheets are hand sewn together then the marbled endpapers, hand made using oil-based inks, are added. After the spine is glued, the fore edge or right-hand side is trimmed to size and the book "rounded" to make the spine convex. The boards are attached and a paper and card spine added.

Now the leather or "skiver", which arrives as a dyed skin large enough for "turn ins" around the boards, is glued and left to dry under weights. Gold foil for the Chapel image and text is stamped into the leather, while the gold lines and decoration are added by hand. Finally, the endpapers are glued to the inside of the boards and the book put in a press until it is dry.

Walpole Old Chapel has celebrated key life events since it first became a place of worship in 1689 and today we welcome all, including same sex couples, who would like to marry in Walpole Old Chapel, those who would like a child or adult baptism and those who wish to hold a funeral or a memorial service in this unique building.



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How to book a place on the Free Bus Service to Walpole Old Chapel Carol Service Saturday 13th December 3.00pm



From Walpole Playing Field Pavilion, Walpole, IP19 9BG

Return ticket - leaves from Walpole Playing Field Pavilion at

2.40pm, returns from Walpole Old Chapel at 4.20pm

Park your car at Walpole Playing Field

15 seats only are available for this return trip.

Please book your free ticket on Ticket Source. You will need to show it for both journeys.

From Co-op Halesworth, Halesworth, IP19 8LU.

Return ticket - leaves from the front entrance of Halesworth Co-op at

2.20pm, returns from Walpole Old Chapel at 4.40

Park your car in the Coop car park.

15 seats only are available for this return trip.

Please book your free ticket on Ticket Source. You will need to show it for both journeys.



To Book your ticket:

- **Go to Ticket Source website**
- **On the search bar write Walpole Old Chapel**
- **The two bus services will appear, and you may book your free ticket**
- **Or use the direct link below**

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/walpole-old-chapel>

Contact information

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

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

Jacque Burgess, Editor, Newsletter - 07505 788769 or newsletter@walpoleoldchapel.org

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

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