



## The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel Newsletter, March 2026



*The Chapel bathed in winter sunshine on the day of our Carol Service, 13 December 2025*

### *Lin le Versha writes:* **Candlelight Carol Service celebrated Christmas**

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December was a bright but chilly afternoon for the 155 people who, following in the footsteps of previous generations of worshippers, filled the Chapel for our annual candlelit Carol Service. This year the service was led by our newly appointed minister, Revd Dr Catherine Ball, who has given us her impressions of leading her first Walpole Chapel carol service.



“Thank you for the opportunity to lead the Christmas Carol Service at Walpole Old Chapel in which we recalled afresh the biblical story of Christ's birth. It was a delightful experience in such a special place with so much history, charm and character. Thank you to the readers and dramatists, who read with great expression. And to our soloist, Rob Gildon, who gave a moving rendition of a traditional carol. Thank you to all who came - the balconies were full!!

There was a lovely sense of community and fellowship. The singing was hearty and the whole experience was magical as the sun went down during the service.



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As the light dimmed, the tea light candles flickered, giving a sparkly light. The warming mulled apple juice and home-made mince pies were a perfect finish. The whole service helped get me in the Christmas spirit. I look forward to leading other such services in the future."

Join us in celebrating Christmas in December 2026 at our next Carol Service, which will be on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December.

*Simon Weeks writes:* **FWOC is the new owner of the Chapel**

Walpole Old Chapel was rescued by the Historic Chapels Trust (HCT) in 1994 to save building from being sold at auction. For the last 22 years, HCT has cared for the building with the support of the local group of local Friends who registered with the Charity Commission as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in February 2022. FWOC supported HCT in acquiring a major grant of £374,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to pay for the *Unwrapped* project with additional contributions of approx. £25,000 from local and national donors with the intention of handing over ownership of the Chapel to FWOC once the conservation work was completed.

Between April and December last year, Cliveden Conservation removed the concrete render from the west and the north walls of the Chapel. Repairs were made to the original timber framework and new wattle-and-daub was made to fill in cavities where the original materials had crumbled to dust. Three coats of lime plaster were then applied and, once dry, painted with five coats of lime render. Window frames were repaired, the brick plinths repointed and new rainwater goods were fitted. The results are spectacular as this photo of the west wall of the Chapel shows.





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With two walls now completely restored, HCT formally transferred ownership of Walpole Old Chapel to FWOC at the beginning of March 2026. Chris Smith, Chairman of HCT said "Walpole was one of the earliest chapels acquired by HCT soon after the charity was established, and it will be one of the last to be re-homed. We are pleased it has gone to The Friends, with whom we are sure it will have a bright future. We wish them and the chapel well".

## "It could be you" – and it was! FWOC has been awarded a Heritage Fund development grant



FWOC was awarded a 'development phase' grant of c£96,000 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund at the start of January. This is to help the Trustees to carry out the work needed to put them in a good position to apply later this year for a much larger 'delivery phase' grant. If successful, this grant will fund the repair and conservation of the South and East elevations of the chapel, and some works to the interior of the building to support a wider range of activities, including a sound and hearing system, performance lighting, and some form of heating. The grant would also pay for recruitment and training of additional volunteers and trustees, digital enhancements and improved promotion and marketing – all with the aim of encouraging more people to visit the chapel to ensure its financial sustainability in the future. Our grateful thanks go to all the players of the National Lottery for making this possible. FWOC will need to appoint several professional consultants to carry out the development phase work. In late February, we advertised for a **Project Manager**. Copies of the advertisement and the project Brief can be found on the Procurement page of the Chapel website.

## News about Events at the Chapel in 2026

After last year's enforced break, FWOC is delighted to offer a rich programme of cultural events over summer and autumn this year. In addition to an exciting programme of words and music, we shall also have an **Artist in Residence** working in the Chapel between March and October. And for the first time in more than a decade, a **Harvest Festival Service** will be held in the Chapel, led by the Rev Dr Catherine Ball, on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 4 p.m.

### Programme of Events at Walpole Old Chapel 2026

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 3.00pm – 5.00pm The Dollard Collectief**

**Voices through the Trees: the Northwestern Seaboard Down the Ages.**

A fundraiser for the Chapel. A programme of literary and musical footprints from northwestern Europe – Sweden, the Netherlands and the British Isles.

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 3.00pm – 5.00pm Blake Morrison & The Hosepipe Band**

'**Scenes From a Life**' features poems from Blake Morrison's new collection **Afterburn**, accompanied by The Hosepipe Band.



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**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August 3.00 – 5.00pm 'Here's the Summer'**

**The Lovekyn Consort** celebrates the natural world in seventeenth-century music by Purcell, Croft, Lanier, Hume and others.

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August Sing the Chapels Weekend with Brendan Taaffe & John Harrison, hosted by the South Norfolk Community Choir.**

Information and tickets on the Walpole Workshop or the entire weekend from **Sing the Chapels at Snappy Tickets.**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August Rob Gildon**

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 3.00pm – 5.00pm Tin Foil Aliens**

A popular five-piece band of local musicians playing original music

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September Heritage Open Day 10.00am – 4.00pm**

Exhibition on Everyday Lives; and Ride-and-Stride.

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 4.00pm Harvest Festival** – A service of thanksgiving and celebration followed by tea and cake. Gifts for the Halesworth Food Bank welcome from 3.00 pm

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December – 3.00pm Carol Service by candlelight**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Tickets for events between 7<sup>th</sup> June - 9<sup>th</sup> August, and 23<sup>rd</sup> August - 6<sup>th</sup> September may be pre-booked on Ticket Source Walpole Old Chapel £12; on the door £15. The Heritage Open Day, Harvest Festival and Carol Service are free.

### **GRACE ADAM – artist in residence for 2026 – talks to Lin le Versha**

**As our Artist in Residence for 6 months, what will you do?** GA: I will respond to the chapel, its histories, materials, forms and functions. This means spending time getting to know the building, exploring its histories, seeing it at different times of day and year. I'll make drawings and an installation that come out of that experience. They'll be sited at the chapel for a show at the end of the residency. I'm really interested in our built environments-particularly shared spaces. The buildings we make, change and adapt over years-centuries and are testament to the lives that are and have been connected to them.

**You have offered to run workshops during your residency. Do you have to be good at art to come to a workshop?** GA: Everybody is welcome to the workshops. I'll be there to give you as much tuition and guidance as you would like. It'll be a small friendly group, so whether you're a beginner or have lots of experience, come along.



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*Grace Adam in her studio*

**What made you want to become an artist and how did you do it?** **GA:** I'm not sure I ever considered anything else. It's just the way I am in the world. I did a Foundation Course, a degree, and then went back later to do an MA at Chelsea, followed by a Fellowship and a PGCert.

**What excites or inspires you about working in and around the Chapel?** **GA:** It's a great building. It might sound weird, but I'm a big fan of modernist architecture, so its sparseness and sparseness appeals to me. I like the fact that the building holds its history in the materials, the alterations and the aging. The chapel has witnessed extraordinary events and has a strange and fascinating collection of stories.

**You draw, paint, sculpt and produce installations. At this early stage do you have any ideas of the art you might create?** **GA:** Yes, I'll probably be making large-scale charcoal drawings, and I've got plans for an installation that connects the interior of the building with the land around it, but that idea will develop as I get to know the building better.

**Could you tell us about some of your other residencies?** **GA:** Varied! Residencies include a prison. (That's not quite how it sounds). I've also been artist in residence in schools and colleges, at St Giles in the Fields, Covent Garden, at Banff in Canada and in Budapest.

**In addition to creating art, what else do you do?** **GA:** I teach at Chelsea College of Art, and I talk to patrons and supporters about exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Arts. I've worked with lots of galleries, (Tate, Courtauld, National Portrait Gallery, Whitechapel) with students and teachers and writing learning materials. A great project was working with young curators and art students from Myanmar, supported by the British Council. A colleague and I set up [The Art Channel](#). We make independent films about contemporary exhibitions. We're over a million views. Do subscribe! It's free. We've just been filming at the National Gallery. Standing Infront of Holbein's *Ambassadors* at 8am as the lights were turned on was pretty special.



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**If you could own one piece of art, with no regard for cost, what would it be?** **GA:** Ah, the impossible question! I'd probably have to go for a Rothko. I think you have to be surrounded, so the *Seagram Murals* or Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*.

**What opportunities will there be for us to see your work during or at the end of your residency?**

**GA:** I'll be in the chapel doing some workshops on some Saturdays and part of the Suffolk Open Studios for a weekend in June. (See Walpole Old Chapel website for dates). There will be an exhibition at the end of my residency, which opens the weekend of 26<sup>th</sup> September. Keep an eye out on social media for updates and work in progress. @artistgraceadam @walpoleoldchapel

## Grace Adam's programme at Walpole Old Chapel

**Exhibition open** – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 11.00 – 4.00

**Additional dates** – October – 11.00am – 3.00pm

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> & Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> & Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>, Friday 30<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 31<sup>st</sup>

**Suffolk Open Studios –**

**Walpole Old Chapel Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 11.00 – 5.00**

See the artist at work and some of her work from her residency in the Chapel

**WORKSHOPS: £10 payable by cash or card on the door**

Everybody is welcome to the workshops. Each one will be a small friendly group, so whether you are a beginner or have lots of experience, come along. You don't need to bring anything – just yourself! To reserve a place on a workshop, contact Grace on Instagram @artistgraceadam or on her email: [grace@graceadam.com](mailto:grace@graceadam.com)

**Painting workshop: Saturday 30 May 2 – 4. This will be non-oil paint.** Materials and basic paints will be provided but you are welcome to bring your own water-based paints.

**Drawing workshop: Saturday 13th June 12 – 2 Suffolk Open Studios.** Materials will be provided but feel free to bring your own too.

**Collage workshop: Sunday 12th July 10.30 – 12.30.** Materials will be provided but feel free to bring your own too.



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## Introducing the FWOC Trustees

The transfer of ownership of Walpole Old Chapel from the Historic Chapels Trust is the culmination of many years hard work by the informal group of Friends and volunteers who cared for the Chapel between 1995-2022. The UK Charity Commission approved the application by the local committee of FWOC to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in February 2022. Being a CIO gives the charity a legal identity, with limited liability for trustees, and the ability to operate in its own name within the terms of its charitable objectives. FWOC has been able, therefore, to take over ownership of the Chapel.



**Simon Weeks:** Simon moved to Walpole in 1999 with his family, to a house built about the same time as the Chapel and previously the home of former Chapel custodians. Simon's family has been involved with the Chapel ever since. Simon has retired from Suffolk County Council, where he worked in quality assurance, policy development, project management, and inter-agency partnerships. Simon has been a trustee since FWOC was made a CIO in February 2022. He is Secretary of FWOC, liaises with the Heritage Fund, has the Safeguarding Lead and is Volunteer co-ordinator.



**Lin le Versha:** In 2016 Lin's daughter was married at Walpole Chapel, encouraging Lin to become an Authorised Person registering Marriages for the Chapel. She is Director of the Southwold Arts Festival and a crime writer with a series of six books set in Suffolk. Lin has been a Trustee of FWOC since February 2022. Her major role is as the Programme of Events organiser. She curates our summer programmes of concerts, talks and drama. In 2026, the Chapel will host an artist in residence who will work towards an exhibition and run workshops. Lin hopes that the conservation renovations will increase the range of arts events and community use of the Chapel.



**Lyn Banks:** Lyn spent her working life in education. This included roles as maths teacher, youth worker, and in teacher training. Having achieved a Masters Degree she moved into education advisory and administration work and Ofsted Inspections. In her retirement Lyn is involved 'hands on' with a variety of local charities and community organisations including FWOC and a community owned pub. Lyn has been a trustee since FWOC became a CIO in February 2022. She is the charity's Treasurer.



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**Paul Simmons:** Paul worked in the NHS and then became secretary of a clergy charity. He knew about the Chapel from his friends David and Linda Holmes and after he moved to Halesworth was invited to join the team then running the Chapel. He has always had a love of Suffolk's religious built heritage. Paul became a Trustee when FWOC became a CIO in February 2022. His current roles include supporting and promoting the formal Friends scheme, liaising with Patrons of the charity, and health and safety matters. Paul chairs the monthly Board meetings of the Trustees and the Annual General Meeting.



**Miriam Stead:** Miriam has a career in museums, arts and culture. She was Head of Heritage, Arts & Culture for Essex County Council before retiring in 2013. She has been a volunteer or a trustee for several charities, including the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History, the Suffolk Local History Council, Bawdsey Radar and the Essex Cultural Diversity Project. Miriam became a FWOC Trustee in 2023, leading the Discovery Local History Project and working with Simon on fund-raising. Miriam lectures to local history groups and is the FWOC liaison with UEA's School of History.



**Jacquie Burgess:** Jacquie is an emeritus professor in Cultural Geography whose research developed innovative ways of engaging communities in environmental policy-making. After retirement in 2010, she became a Member of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads National Park, chairing the Authority between 2015-2018. Jacquie visited Walpole in 2024, fell in love with the Chapel, became a Friend and volunteered with the Discovery Project. She was made a Trustee at the July 2025 AGM. Her current roles include editing FWOC's Newsletter and working with other trustees on the Heritage Fund development grant.

### Contact information

Simon Weeks, Secretary: 01986 784348 or [info@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:info@walpoleoldchapel.org)

To become a Friend of Walpole Old Chapel: [friends@walpoleoldchapel.org](mailto:friends@walpoleoldchapel.org)

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

For more information and up-to-date news, please go to [www.walpoleoldchapel.org](http://www.walpoleoldchapel.org)