

The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel
Charity Registration number 1198030

Annual Report for the Year 2024-2025

The third year of the Friends of Walpole Old Chapel [FWOC] has seen significant progress in meeting its charitable objectives. This report deals first with developments in the proposed transfer of ownership of the Chapel from the Historic Chapels Trust [HCT] to FWOC. Second, a major grant to fund the first phase of conservation work to re-render the west and north elevations of the building was secured in March 2025. Third, activities to educate the public about the religious, historical and cultural significance of the Chapel were expanded. Finally, income and donations from visitors and audiences increased in 2024-5; more Friends willing to support the Chapel have been recruited, as have the number of active volunteers. The report ends with the financial position of FWOC as of 31 March 2025.

The year began with uncertainty regarding future ownership of the Chapel. The prospective new owner withdrew from negotiations with HCT in late May 2024 which meant the Chapel was at risk of being sold at public auction. The Trustees, after careful deliberation about the potential risks and benefits of taking on ownership of the building, decided to proceed with an attempt for FWOC to take on the ownership (as reported at last year's AGM). A Memorandum of Understanding between FWOC and HCT was signed in August, with HCT retaining ownership until the end of 2025 when the property, the Chapel and chapel yard, will be assigned to the Friends charity. FWOC will become the lead organisation for securing funding for phase two of the re-rendering project and take over responsibility for the long-term care and maintenance of the Chapel.

Securing sufficient funds to pay for the re-rendering of the Chapel has been the central concern of the Trustees this year. Local donations from businesses and individuals of more than £42,000 have helped to support the case being made by HCT and FWOC to national funding organisations. In late autumn, led by HCT's professional consultants, we participated in the tendering process for the re-rendering work. Negotiations between the potential major funders between January and March 2025 ended successfully. The cost of re-rendering the north and west elevations of the building will be covered by the Community Asset Fund (CAF) with the remaining cost being met by HCT and the Reserve fund held by FWOC. Cliveden Conservation began work on site on 14 April 2025.

FWOC continued to develop its programme of educational activities in 2024-5. Notable work by volunteer members of the Discovery Project this year included a detailed photographic survey of graffiti in the chapel, and mining the Chapel's Baptism records (1706-1835) to discover the locations and distances that members of the Chapel's gathered congregation travelled for baptisms. Both projects were displayed for visitors at the Heritage Open Days in September. Summaries of the projects have been published in FWOC's quarterly Newsletter which has more than 600 subscribers and full accounts of both pieces of research are available on the Chapel's website.

The chapel hosted 4 visits from students at the local Bramfield House School. The relationship with the School of History at UEA was also strengthened in 2024-5. Three M.A. students completed their public heritage projects with work useful to the

Chapel. In June 2024 we hosted a lecture by Dr Joel Halcombe on 'Walpole & the Puritan Revolution', sponsored by the Centre for East Anglian Studies, now available on the Chapel's website. A full programme of 23 events was held over the summer, comprising ten talks, nine concerts, a music workshop for children, a play, a poetry reading and the annual candlelit carol service. Just under one thousand visitors attended the events, with ticket sales and donations showing an increase on the two previous years.

Prudently, the Chapel has retained its certification as a Registered Place of Worship since 1996. The 2024 Carol Service was the last one to be led by Revd. Bill Mahood, who has retired after 18 years as our minister. We are grateful for his years of devoted service officiating at all the weddings, funerals and baptisms held in the Chapel. The Revd. Dr Catherine Ball will be taking over the role as our new minister and we look forward to welcoming her to Walpole Old Chapel.

The Trustees were sorry to learn of the death of Dr Kate Tiller, one of our patrons, who had a deep love of the Chapel and was a generous donor to the Chapel's repair and conservation fund. The professional opera singer, Robert Gildon, has agreed to be a Patron. His enthusiasm for the building and recognition of its superb acoustics for music events, many of which he has personally initiated and participated in, complements the gifts of our other patrons. All are warmly thanked for their support during the year.

The numbers of paid-up Friends of Walpole Old Chapel rose to 80 with three honorary life members. The mandate from the 2024 AGM to have three tiers of subscription levels has largely been successful. FWOC now has 16 Friends at Supporter level and 18 at Benefactor level within the total number of Friends. Friends' income is used to support the running costs of the Chapel. One Friend has played a very active role in promoting the Chapel within his social network and we hope to expand this aspect of recruitment next year. Finally, FWOC recruited a new Trustee in September 2025 through the UEA link, and the number of volunteers has also increased to more than 20 and the Trustees are exploring ways to encourage more active participation in hosting the Chapel's open afternoon and summer evening events.

FWOC ended the financial year with £44,398.52 in its bank accounts. The target for 2024-25 was an operational surplus of £2,500 but this was surpassed more than threefold with a surplus of £8,737.72. This was achieved by concerts and events at the chapel, which contributed £3325 in profits, and the generosity of the Friends, whose membership contributions amounted to £4,678. Funds brought in by the Friends have been used for the day-to-day running costs of the chapel. During the year, FWOC also received specific donations of £2183.06 for the Unwrapped Refurbishment Project and this reserved fund is £13,430.98 in credit as of 31st March 2025.

The Trustees of FWOC: Simon Weeks (Secretary), Lyn Banks (Treasurer), Paul Simmons (Membership co-ordinator), Lin le Versha (Summer programme convenor), Miriam Stead (Discovery Project leader), Jacquelin Burgess (new trustee, autumn 2024)

Walpole Old Chapel Annual Return April 2024 - March 2025								
ASSETS				Start of year April 24		End of year March 25		
	Cheque a/c			8,810.64	8,810.64	12,241.19		
	Deposit a/c (general)			22,177.04	26,850.16	32,157.33		
	Deposit a/c (legacies) Closed 04.04.24 with balance put into general deposit a/c			4,673.12				
	Total assets			£ 35,660.80	£ 35,660.80	£ 44,398.52		
			April 2024	£ 35,660.80				
INCOME								
General								
Weddings/ funerals/ etc.		1,400.00						
Open days & donations		2,890.53						
Concerts, hiring, etc.		6,818.19						
Sales		922.87						
Interest from deposit a/cs		307.17						
		12,338.76						
Membership/Friends		4,678.00						
Unwrapped								
Donations		1,306.56						
Plaster Squares		235.00						
Ride & Stride		641.50						
		2,183.06						
OVERALL INCOME		19,199.82	£ 54,860.62					
EXPENDITURE								
General								
Printing costs & advertising	788.98	788.98						
Water/electricity #	436.04							
Websites #	481.00							
Concerts	3,492.55	3,492.55						
Weddings/ baptisms	680.00	680.00						
Merchandise for sales	1,200.94	1,200.94						
Membership fees/ leases #	188.68							
Maintenance/ repairs #	2,328.00							
Consumeables	68.13	68.13						
Equipment	790.28	790.28						
		7,020.88						
Membership/Friends		7.50						
# These annual running costs paid for by Friends		3,433.72						
		3,441.22						
OVERALL EXPENDITURE		£ 10,462.10	£ 44,398.52					
			March 2025	£ 44,398.52				
OVERALL SURPLUS				£ 8,737.72	Surplus - General		5,317.88	
					- Unwrapped		2,183.06	
					- Friends		1,236.78	
SUPPORTING INFORMATION								
Allocation of Assets					Equipment and physical assets			
Working reserve	6,000.00	Note increase from previous year			A-board			
General	21,047.21				First Aid Kit			
Friends	2,472.10				Key safe			
Unwrapped - general	13,430.98				Visitors book			
Unwrapped - Discovery Project	1,448.23				Hasp & lock			
	£ 44,398.52				Hand held vacuum cleaner			
					Wine glasses, coffee mugs, boiler, kettle and some crockery items			
					External advertising boards			
					Black-out blinds			
					Hard hats			
					Walkie-talkies for car parking duties			
					New rubbish and recycling bins			
					Cupboard in toilet			
					Merchandise for sale (approx.)			
					- £200 worth of post cards			
					- £500 mugs and teapots			
					- £ 90 guides			
Unwrapped Project								
			Funds held by FWOC			Funds held by HCT		Total funds
Start of year April 24			£ 12,696.15			£17,283.49	£29,979.64	
Income	Plaster squares		£ 235.00					
	Ride & Stride		£ 641.50					
	Donations		£ 1,306.56					
			£ 2,183.06					
Expenditure					Prof'al fees	486.00		
					Costs relating to refurbishment planning	1,863.49		
						2,349.49		
End of year March 25			£ 14,879.21				£14,934.00	£29,813.21