

## 2023/24 Annual Reports

### Chairman's Overview

Life in the two Parishes had pretty much got back on an even keel, post pandemic, when we were hit by the worst flooding in living memory. Storms Babet and Henk caused devastation at Brook Farm, Cookley and severe damage to the Walpole Pavilion. As we all too clearly remember, other properties had water lapping at their doors, and like many other communities in the area, were partially and temporarily cut off. The reasons for this near-biblical inundation are many-fold and now mostly understood, but solutions will be harder to achieve. But we live to fight another day, and must remain alert to the dangers of flooding, and be prepared individually and collectively to protect our properties and infrastructure as best we can, when and wherever possible.

Other matters arising...

The two eco homes currently standing empty and uninhabitable in **Neave Close** are a major headache at our meetings. There is much liaising required to get anyone at Council level to take any responsibility for their future – watch this space but don't hold your breath. **West House** - at the top of the hill past St Mary's, is considered by the Council to be a house of note and a building at risk. Its future continues to give us anxiety as the absentee owner refuses point blank to communicate at any level, and the empty house continues to deteriorate. The **Village School** building - its future too, remains uncertain. We believe it is the joint responsibility of the 'Church' and the Education Authority. IF it was offered for sale, could we afford to buy it and maintain it? What would we like to do with it, and would anyone like to create a Trust to manage its future? All, and any thoughts, would be

appreciated, and I am minded to have a meeting later this year to see what interest there might be out there.

The maintenance of our **roads, drains, signage and speeding traffic** continue to be the most discussed matters on our monthly Agendas. My thanks to Councillor Porter for taking the lead on these issues, and for his persistence in harrying the Highways Dept. Potholes continue to appear, disappear (when repaired), then reappear a little later, depending on frost, flood or weight of traffic. Regrettably, the problem is here to stay due to lack of public finances, so we must drive accordingly and treat them as 'speed inhibitors'.

We are currently angling for additional warning signs on **Church Hill**. This blind corner on a fairly steep, narrow and busy B-road in the middle of the village is a potentially dangerous combination. County Councillor Stephen Burroughes, who managed to find funds to replace two important 'finger' signposts at either end of Walpole, is exploring what might be possible or permissible.

Several non-contentious **Planning Applications** have passed before the Parish Council over the past 12 months. We try to see the 'human' side of each application, where the quality of life might be enhanced without affecting neighbours or the environment. We can only offer recommendations - the County Council tend to make their own decisions...

Renewal and revival: it is very good to see **St Mary's church** looking immaculate after its internal renovation. A lot of creative fund raising by the PCC (Parochial Parish Council) and a substantial grant from Heveningham Hall Country Fair Trust, have achieved so much. Bravo members of the PCC. Continuing matters non-secular, **Cookley St Michael's** PCC recently re-elected Jane Evers as Church Warden for the coming year. A well-attended Traditional Communion Service continues to be

held here every third Sunday of the month - and it is with considerable happiness that Tanzy (Jeff & Julia Crabb's daughter) is being married at St Michaels this July - the first wedding to be held in Cookley church for many years. And for those who may not have noticed, the Cookley village sign is currently missing. The post rotted and blew down over Christmas. A little light engineering work is required, but it should be reinstated this summer.

**The Old Chapel** occupies an important space within our parish and in our village's history. Simon Weeks and his team are fighting to raise an enormous amount of money to secure its future, and by supporting the programme of events this year, we can all help to strengthen his hand as he endeavours to gain funding via grants etc.

**Walpole Allotments** continue to flourish under Jane Henson's careful watch; the Walpole Willows presents a slight problem as there is no longer a source of funds to maintain them, and Will Austin continues as our 'grounds-man', keeping the green and cemetery immaculately groomed.

### **Comings and Goings:**

There has been a boost to the number of members of the **Playing Field Trust** - and I should like to express everyone's gratitude to outgoing Trustee Zoé Mair for her invaluable contribution to the successful running of the Playing Field, Play area and the Pavilion.

Goodbye and thank you to **Cookpole Energy Action**, who after many years of inspiring and encouraging 'green' initiatives like co-ordinated oil deliveries and electric bike hire, are calling it a day. My thanks go to the Editors of the recently revitalised **Cookpole News** who are now able to keep us up to speed and well-informed on all local events via email. Do sign up if you are

interested in receiving details.  
([whatsonincookpole@gmail.com](mailto:whatsonincookpole@gmail.com)).

The Parish Council is here to act on residents' behalf, as best as it sees fit, and I would like to thank our Clerk, Paul Widdowson for keeping us on the straight and narrow.

Thanks also to County Councillor Stephen Burroughes and Borough Councillor, Julia Ewart who frequently join is at our monthly Parish Council meetings; everyone is welcome to come along. Meetings are generally held on the third Thursday of the month. Please see our recently refurbished noticeboards for details.

Final thanks to my Vice Chairman, Christopher Leggett and to all my fellow Parish Councillors for the giving of their precious time and their much valued advice, views and opinions.

Rob Chase, Chairman  
Cookley & Walpole Parish Council

## **Individual Reports for the 2023/24**

### **Village Archivist**

I conduct a weekly survey of local news reports from the media and add any local photos I may take to those items.

I was hoping that a neighbouring village could host a version of my previous Road Shows but this appears not-to-be so I will hopefully take part in a similar event in Walpole this Autumn in the Pavilion.

Various items of correspondence from the Americas and Canada arrive and are added to the books.

Most missives sent out to villagers by email are printed out and filed - these forming a good substitute for the printed Cookpole News of old.

Cally Callomon

## **Walpole Old Chapel**

Walpole Old Chapel Report to Annual Parish Meeting 2024  
The Historic Chapels Trust (HCT) has owned Walpole Old Chapel since 1995, soon after it was established to care for 20+ historic chapels that did not fit the remit of other conservation charities. Sadly, HCT has not remained financially viable. It is currently going through a process of trying to 're-home' the buildings in its care, before winding up as a charity. This has created uncertainty for the local 'Friends' for several years, as we have not known who the future owner might be nor, indeed, if any organisation would want to take The Chapel on at all with such a big repair bill looming.

So, we are very pleased that Historic Suffolk (HS) has offered to take on ownership of The Chapel. This Suffolk charity, formerly Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust, owns three other historic buildings and has been in existence since 1973. There are various hoops to jump through before the transfer is complete, but solicitors for both HCT and HS are currently working on the documentation.

Chapel visitors and audiences will hardly notice any difference under the new owners. The Friends will continue to manage it on a day-to-day basis, including public opening on Saturday afternoons, religious services and the summer programme of live performances.

We now face the daunting challenge of trying to raise c£400,000 for the urgently needed repair and conservation work at The Chapel. As many people will know, the external render has failed. It all needs to be taken off, some structural

timbers need to be strengthened, and then new laths and render applied. Fortunately, both HS and HCT are contributing to the fundraising activities, so it doesn't all fall on the shoulders of The Friends. But even so, it's a substantial sum, and we cannot yet be sure when we'll be able to start the work. In the meantime, we have a lively programme of events for people to enjoy over the summer, as shown below.

**Simon Weeks Secretary,  
The Friends of Walpole Old Chapel - 01986 784348**

### **Events at Walpole Old Chapel in 2024**

2nd June 3pm – Yeo Yat-Soon – Harpsichord music from 1420 – 1800

6th June 6.30pm – ‘Walpole and the Puritan Revolution’ – Dr Joel Halcomb,  
A talk on the puritans who established Walpole Old Chapel

9th June 3pm – ‘Non-conforming’ – Suffolk Poetry Society, members' readings

16th June 3pm – Ibrahim Aziz – ‘Abel and the solo viol’

7th July 3pm – A Summer's Day Concert – with a group of musicians who regularly collaborate with The Mozartists

13th July 7pm – Syzewell Gap – Folk tunes, songs, stories and dance

21st July 3pm – ‘Tea for the British ... with a twist of Suffolk’ – a talk by Dr Miriam Stead

18th August 3pm – Music, Masques and Murder at the Jacobean Court  
Music & Readings with Rob Gildon, Lucy Hughes-Hallett

1st Sept. 3pm – Bloomsbury Baroque -Songs and dance tunes from Georgian London

14th & 15th Sept. – Heritage Open Weekend. An exhibition: 'Walpole Old Chapel - Local Connections'

22nd Sept. 3pm – The Dollard Collectief – Poetry & music on the theme of change

13th October 3pm – 'The Taxing Issue of Tithing' – Laxefelders  
A tale of local history with music, lots of hats and a rabbit!

14th December 3pm – Candlelit Carol Service – all welcome  
[www.walpoleoldchapel.org/programme](http://www.walpoleoldchapel.org/programme)  
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/halesworth/walpole-old-chapel>

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## **Village Allotments Report**

It's been a busy year with the building of the gazebo and 4 new plot holders.

The gazebo has proved very popular and I am pleased to say is being used by dog walkers and others as well as allotmenters as a lovely place to shelter from the sun and the rain. It also allows access to the wildlife pond viewing deck. The pond is settling down well and a large variety of pond-life now call it home.

We will be holding the 'official' opening of the gazebo on the 1st of June at 12 noon. This will be followed by the chance to make your own plant supports using willow from the Walpole willows, learn to draw wild flowers workshop and a ceramics workshop. There will also be the opportunity to learn a little about bee keeping and help to build more layers on our insect hotel. Afternoon teas will also be served. The open day will run from 12-4pm with craft workshops from 12.30.

**Jane Henson, Parish Councillor**

### **George Calver Trust Report.**

Over the last year the Trustees of the GCT have considered three applications, and have awarded two grants to local residents.

In July 2023 the GCC awarded £300 of book tokens to the children at Bramfield Primary School at the end of year prize giving ceremony.

The Trustees have recently circulated new information hoping to heighten awareness of the Charity and encourage worthy applications.

**Lucy Winter**  
**Chairman of the George Calver Trust**

### **WALPOLE AND COOKLEY PLAYING FIELD TRUST - Annual Report May 2024**

During the last year the Committee has grown in number and there is now representation from Cookley. A new Chair has been appointed and huge thanks must go to Zoe Mair who



stepped down from the role in November 2023, for all her hard work and commitment over the years of her tenure.

The current committee members and newly assigned roles are as follows:

*Anita Hill - Chair / Events management / Village Email  
Sara Sayer - Vice Chair / Events management / Village Email  
Sam Sayer - Treasurer  
Lee Hill - Playground Support  
Mike Porter - Maintenance  
Zoe Mair, Kate Rous, Nicole Travers*

The key outcome in appointing a designated events team has been to plan a calendar of events. To date these have included: Christmas Cheer; quiz night; pub and pud night; Good Friends Good Friday and pop up pub evenings - all of which have been well supported and very successful. Future planned events will include a Saturday Brunch teamed with an Allotment Open Day; a ticketed live music and supper event; cheese and wine evening; curry night, a second quiz night and additional pop up pub evenings. In addition to the above social events, the pavilion continues to be used for monthly coffee mornings, meetings, Craft Club and private hire. There is scope to draw in local groups to run clubs and sporting activities to make more use of the building and playing field.

The Trust continues to be a non profit organisation and funds raised from the events are used for the upkeep and maintenance of the building, play area and playing field - this includes insurance and utilities.

An annual inspection of the play area was completed by David Bracey Play Safety Inspections on 26th February 2024. Recommendations highlighted in the report are being actioned.

Following the October flooding, the Trustees have explored a number of flood proofing solutions to mitigate the effects of future flooding - the Trustees have concluded that the cost of

constructing flood defences is prohibitive and have agreed that this is therefore not a viable solution. There has however, been positive discussion between the Trustees and the Estates Manager at Heveningham Hall to explore options for dredging dykes on the boundaries between the playing field and Heveningham Hall and this work will be undertaken in line with advice from the Environment Agency.

Moving forwards there is a need to continue to develop further fund raising ideas and activities particularly in the light of our punitive insurance costs.

**Anita Hill**

**Chair, Walpole and Cookley Playing Field Trust**

### **ST MARY'S WALPOLE: May 2023 - April 2024**

St Mary's has continued to hold monthly services throughout the year - these have included Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Crib and Mother's Day / Evensong Services.

St Mary's has also hosted the following key fund-raising events:

**Sunday 21st May:** Lecture by Dr Jessica Frazier - Professor of Theology at Trinity College, Oxford. Jessica took us on a tour of the world of philosophy from the Americas through Europe & the Middle East to Asia.

**Sunday 9th July:** An evening of live music from the Dave Keech Jazz Quartet. The Quartet for this event featured three up and coming young musicians who are studying Jazz at the Leeds Conservatoire - Isaac Keech on piano, Sean Blake on Double Bass and Adam Scott on drums. Dave led the quartet with his phenomenal trombone playing.

**Sunday 6th August:** We welcomed Soprano Katherine MacRae and Pianist Jodie Schloss for a truly wonderful recital. The

performance encompassed British and European Folk Songs by Benjamin Britten, Manuel de Falla and Gustav Mahler.

**Sunday 24th September:** We saw the return of internationally acclaimed Korean- American Violinist Elly-Suh. On this occasion Elly-Suh was accompanied by Japanese Classical Pianist Yuki Negishi. Both Elly-Suh and Yuki have performed solo to audiences around the world, so to have them perform together at St Mary's was a real honour.

We kick started December with a wreath making workshop facilitated by PCC member Jane Henson. Places were in high demand following the success of Jane's workshop in December 2022. The event afforded everyone the opportunity to catch up, enjoy mince pies and mulled wine along with Christmas music to take in the festive mood. We anticipate that this will be a yearly event at St Mary's. Throughout the year Jane is instrumental in coordinating our floral displays in the church and we thank her for this. Our thanks must also go to those members in the village who supported Jane in December to produce the most wonderful of displays in preparation for our Christmas Crib Service. We were absolutely bowled over by the level of support for the Crib Service, the Church was packed to overflowing and we were delighted to have so many children involved in the readings and the setting out of the Nativity Scene.

As the above events show we have continued to work hard to raise funds to support the renovation work identified in the 2020 Quinquennial Report. In summary this entailed providing suitable protection and access; raking out and repointing low-level flintwork joints in the exterior walls and buttresses; repairing plasterwork and preparing and redecorating the Nave, Aisle and Porch interior walls.

Together with the monies raised and the awards received from

our successful applications for grants, we have been able to commission the planned exterior and interior church renovations. Our Architect, Matthew Thomas (DipArch MA(Cons), Ecclesiastical Architect) drew up a schedule of works and we appointed church buildings restorer L A Hurrell, to undertake the work upon completion of our fundraising efforts. The works were completed over four weeks in April 2024 and we are delighted with the results.

In closing, it is also worth mentioning that in our efforts to become environmentally friendly we have been successful in gaining the ROCHA Eco Church Bronze Award. Going forward we will be working towards achieving the next level in this award scheme.

**Anita Hill**

**Treasurer St Mary's Walpole**

**Lee Hill - Warden St Mary's Walpole**

**6th May 2024**