



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Monday 20 February 2017**

### **Bath Abbey's historic ledger stones recorded by volunteers**

More than 50 volunteers have signed up to help record Bath Abbey's historic ledgerstones, ahead of a long-term project to restore the Abbey's floor which is collapsing.

Ledgerstones are flat stones placed in the floors of mainly parish churches which usually bear an inscription of the name and date of the person who is buried there. Many also include interesting inscriptions about the person, their family and their life in the local community.

In partnership with [The Ledgerstone Survey of England and Wales](#) (LSEW), the Abbey aims to record all 891 of its ledgerstones, some dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, before these are lifted temporarily in order to repair the floor and secure the foundations beneath.

This Autumn, building work will start inside the Abbey as part of the Footprint project, a £19.3 million programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure the Abbey building and improve its hospitality, worship and service to the city. However, before any of the planned building work including floor repairs can begin, all 891 of the historic ledgerstones in the Abbey will need to be recorded accurately. This will ensure that once the stone floor has been successfully repaired and re-laid, each individual ledger stone is put back properly and in the right place.

In addition, the ledgerstone recording will also form the basis for new trails, tours and experiences for visitors developed as part of the Footprint programme.

Ollie Taylor, Bath Abbey's Interpretation Officer, said: "These ancient stones are an important part of the Abbey's heritage, many of which have been part of the Abbey floor for hundreds of years without being fully recorded. If we don't do it now, some of the inscriptions will have worn away so they'll sadly be lost to future generations. Thanks to our volunteers, the stones' positions, condition and inscriptions will be carefully documented, and the lives of those they commemorate will be researched.

"There are some fascinating stories to be told about the people who lived and worked within the parish, as well as the many visitors who came to Bath to use the spa waters in the 18th and 19th centuries. The stories contained in the Abbey's ledger stones will be used as part of the interpretation plans for the Footprint project.

We were overwhelmed by the number of people who came forward to offer their help. These range from individuals from the Abbey community to groups such as [BEMSCA](#), [NADFAS](#) and [U3A](#). It's great that there are so many individuals in Bath who feel a connection with the Abbey and are keen to help preserve its heritage and history."

Julian Litten, Chairman of LSEW which developed a template for methodically recording ledgers currently being used by Bath Abbey, explains: "Just over 250,000 ledgerstones survive in England and Wales, so it shows how important it is to ensure that any ledgerstones that remain, in particular



the information they contain, is recorded, understood and appreciated. If recorded properly, they give us an important insight into the people and local communities that lived and worked around the Abbey through the ages.”

The ledgerstone recording will take place in the Abbey throughout February and March this year. Visitors are welcome to come in and see the volunteers on their hands and knees, as they record and document the hundreds of ledgerstones in the Abbey.

Charles Curnock, Bath Abbey’s Footprint Project Director, said: “The ledgerstone recording signals the start of a really exciting time as the Footprint project moves up another gear. Many churches have a similar problem with their floor but with the Abbey being an especially busy church, together with the urgent need to repair the floor, recording the ledgerstones is increasingly a priority for us. Most of the ledgerstones have been hidden beneath pews for nearly 180 years. By the end of this project, this important part of our city’s heritage will be available to be newly appreciated by and preserved for future generations. We urge local people to discover more about the Abbey’s historic floor and see first-hand the work taking place.”

If you would like to know more about the Footprint Project, please visit [www.bathabbey.org/footprint](http://www.bathabbey.org/footprint) , email: [footprint@bathabbey.org](mailto:footprint@bathabbey.org) or follow @bathfootprint on Twitter.

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**Notes to editors:**

For further information please contact Elaine Teh or Lucy Ryder, Communications Officer, on 01225 303320 or [comms@bathabbey.org](mailto:comms@bathabbey.org).

**About Bath Abbey**

Bath Abbey is a flourishing Church of England parish church which technically serves a small city centre parish (Bath Abbey with St James). This parish has a small residential population and primarily consists of commercial properties; and most of the regular congregation and the 692 people on the electoral roll live in other parishes or come from outside the city of Bath. The Abbey holds daily services of morning or evening prayer or Holy Communion; and the standard pattern of Sunday worship is for five daily services attended on average by 630 people. Special services at Advent, Christmas and Easter are well attended; and many local organisations hold annual services in the Abbey. The Abbey has four choirs: Men’s, Boys’ and Girls’ choirs support worship in services; whilst Melody Makers is a choir for younger children which performs in concerts in the Abbey once a term and at other events in and around Bath. The Abbey runs a successful Schools Singing Programme, an outreach activity which supports singing within local schools and holds regular workshops and concerts in the Abbey. The Abbey welcomes approximately 400,000 visitors annually and is open daily all year round; many of these visitors being families and school parties. Apart from being a place of prayer, worship, weddings and funerals, the Abbey has an important role as a visitor destination, a performance space (for audiences anywhere between 10 and 1,000), a general civic space and an exhibition space. [www.bathabbey.org](http://www.bathabbey.org)

**About Bath Abbey’s Footprint**

# BathAbbey

The £19.3 million Footprint project aims to carry out essential repairs to the Abbey's collapsing floor, install a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's unique hot springs as a source of energy and enlarge capacity by creating 200 sq metres of new facilities to fulfil the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality. A programme is also planned to record and interpret the Abbey's 1,200 years of history and this iconic church for millions of visitors including educational visits. [www.bathabbey.org/footprint](http://www.bathabbey.org/footprint)

## **About LSEW**

The Ledgerstone Survey of England and Wales (LSEW), chaired by Dr Julian Litten FSA, which aims to record all the ledgerstones of England and Wales, springboarded a Pilot project addressing the aim of recording the ledgers in churches now out of use for regular worship and in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT). The LSEW has developed a template for methodically recording ledgers and this has been tested by the Church Recorders of the National Association of the Decorative and Fine Arts (NADFAS). LSEW is keen to engage as many volunteers as possible to record ledgers before more disappear and to develop educational resources to enable anyone interested in their local ancestors, in letter cutting or the beauty of these stones, to access ledgers. By working on a defined group of readily accessible churches, led by a dedicated Development Officer, the aim of the Pilot is to fully explore the practicalities of recording with volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and interests.

## **What are ledgerstones?**

Ledgerstones are the flat stones placed over a grave inside a church, usually incised with the name and dates of the deceased. They are often decorated with heraldry and many include interesting inscriptions about the person, their family and their life in the local community. Over 250,000 survive, mainly in parish churches, and most date from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries. The stones used are often from a local or regional source and the carving of the letters and any decoration is of high quality and a readily visible demonstration of the letter cutter's art. A family group of ledgerstones may well be their only visible memorial, if their house has disappeared.