

Bath Abbey



2019 - 2020

Annual Review

www.bathabbey.org





Welcome from the Rector

Dear Friends

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to our Bath Abbey Review for 2019, also covering much of 2020, because of the way the Coronavirus pandemic has played havoc with normal life and timetables.

Indeed, what a strange and disorientating time the last 18 months have proved for us all. As somebody said to me recently, next time around it might be wise to see a trailer for 2021, before we confidently hail it as a "Happy New Year"!

Were life indeed so simple, of course we'd especially want to see whether a vaccine is being trialled in a new starring role during the coming year - or not. For all of us individually, for our families and friendship groups, for the life of our city, our nation and entire global society ... that key assurance alone now decides so much of what we can and cannot genuinely hope to plan, achieve and enjoy together.

Looking back over 2020, as you know, the effect of the pandemic upon life at the Abbey has been severe and far reaching. For many the losses have been deeply personal of course, and we seek continually to care for each other and to hold our loved ones in prayer together. Meanwhile from March to July our Abbey doors were locked firmly shut, unable to host all worship services, all events and concerts, and barring entry to the 150,000 visitors whom we would usually have welcomed and cared for, in that peak period. And as I write, even since reopening, we have still been able to greet back merely a fraction of our normal Abbey congregations, tourists and pilgrims.

Through all of this I have been deeply grateful, and frankly amazed, at all the incredible graciousness, creativity, prayer and sheer hard work that so many, congregation, Churchwardens & PCC members, staff and volunteers alike, have poured into keeping the Abbey alive. New challenges have been immense: first, as Footprint work took up more space in 2019, adjusting services, and moving our welcome ministry, shop, and choir practices to new venues; then in 2020 holding all services online & without music, doing pastoral care by phone and zoom, financial planning & fundraising in genuine extremis, furloughing staff & standing down volunteers, then preparing for Covid safe re-opening and live-streaming our worship ... the list goes on and on.

Through it all we seek to hold faithfully to our God given vision to "live and tell the Good News of Jesus" with our city and its visitors; and we pray for His leading and equipping as the New Year unfolds.

In particular, along with many unknowns and surprises yet to come no doubt, we look forward to seeing more and more clearly the glorious result of our wonderful Footprint Project. The building work itself is due to be finished at last, and fully open by this time next year. May that fact mark 2021, in the end, as a year to put smiles back upon our faces - and the myriads of faces we shall welcome and serve, for generations to come. So be it Lord, by your good grace; and to you alone be the Glory.

Revd Canon Guy Bridgewater
Rector of Bath Abbey

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THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

Connecting with God in the Every Day

Our Mission Action Plan reminds us that the first and primary purpose of Bath Abbey, as for all churches indeed, is 'Thanksgiving: Worshipping and Praying'. In the words of Scripture "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4 v19).

In particular, we are committed to enabling the Abbey to be 'A House of Prayer for all nations, through an everyday rhythm of stillness, prayer and worship'; and our headline goal for 2020 has been to 'Deepen Abbey Prayer Life'.

Of course Covid has caused many to turn to God in fervent personal prayer, without any ecclesiastical prompting. During lockdown we set up a webpage called "Just Ask", making prayer support possible while the Church itself was closed; and we also ran a prayer study course online. Since reopening, Abbey prayer stations have been much used, dedicated to the struggle against Coronavirus and against racism.

Clearly however some of our aims for deepening prayer will need to be carried over into 2021. Examples are the desire to renew our prayer meetings and set up a prayer

ministry team; however it is hoped that our new Prayer Room (sited within Kingston Buildings) will still be launched this Autumn.

Finally of course, our call to Thanksgiving has been muted musically, and for far too long. To at last begin welcoming back our choirs as I write is truly to welcome back Joy, and a sense of God's Glory filling the Abbey once again. Behind our facemasks the rest of us may not be allowed to sing with our voices just yet, but we will certainly sing with our spirits – and with smiles unrestrained!

Revd Canon Guy Bridgewater





THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

Worship, Recitals & Concerts

In the past 18 months the choirs have been on great form. We recorded our Christmas CD 'Gaudete' in January, due for release in October 2020. The boys visited Cambridge in 2019 and sang in Great St Mary's and Jesus College, Chapel. The Girls and Lay-clerks toured the Netherlands singing to large congregations and audiences in Leiden, Wassenaar and Rhenen. We went on a canal trip in Amsterdam and visited a zoo in Rhenen as well as enjoying being together for three days.

In 2019 we had a full season of Organ Recitals including a concert

given by James O'Donnell from Westminster Abbey.

Just before the lockdown we made two video recordings and we are grateful to Ben Sandbrook for his expertise in enabling this. This, together with other recordings enabled there to be an 'anthem for the day' to be posted online. We received so much positive feedback on these – from our Abbey community and around the world and we are grateful to you for your support for letting us know how this music sustained you.

During lockdown the choirs were unable to meet, but the summer months enabled several soloists to sing which offered many opportunities for choristers to work

on new repertoire. Since July we have met as individuals and then increasing sized groups with the first Choral Evensong since March being held on 4 October. Avoiding social contact isn't easy, as part of the enjoyment of being in the choir is to make friends and socialise. However, during the lockdown most singers came to appreciate how much we value being part of this fantastic music team at Bath Abbey.

Huw Williams
Director of Music





THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

Bellringing

Since being elected as Tower Master in April 2019, I have had more challenges than I expected! An early example was our having to access the tower on Sundays by walking through the congregation. Thank you to everyone for adjusting to this.

Then, of course, came Covid-19. The bells were silent for nearly four months – with the notable

exception of Easter Sunday when two of us were allowed in to chime Easter hymns. Sunday service ringing resumed in July (before the 10.15am service), albeit significantly restricted.

In January we marked the sad death at age 88 of one of our longest-standing ringers, Jim Cook, by ringing a half-muffled quarter peal in his memory. In happier news, we have been glad to welcome young ringer

George Tomlin who has been joining us regularly on Sundays.

If anyone is interested in taking up this hugely rewarding hobby, please get in touch.

Matthew Butler
Tower Master





TELLING - Proclaiming the Gospel



The message of the good news of Jesus Christ continues to be strongly proclaimed through the Abbey's visitor interpretation material and supported by work of our visitor chaplains. Their work is complemented by lunchtime talks given by the Abbey Missioner. These have used the biblical stories in the Abbey's stained glass and themes from the popular Alpha course as springboards for the gospel message.

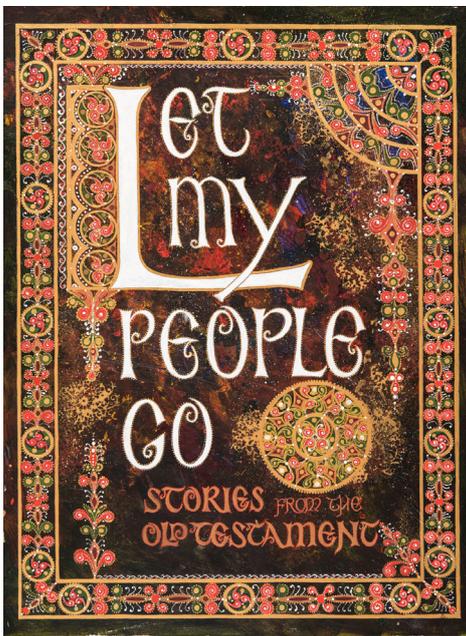
A new families nativity trail and the annual Christmas Market shoppers' carol services enabled us to put the gospel story at the heart of Christmas for many people.

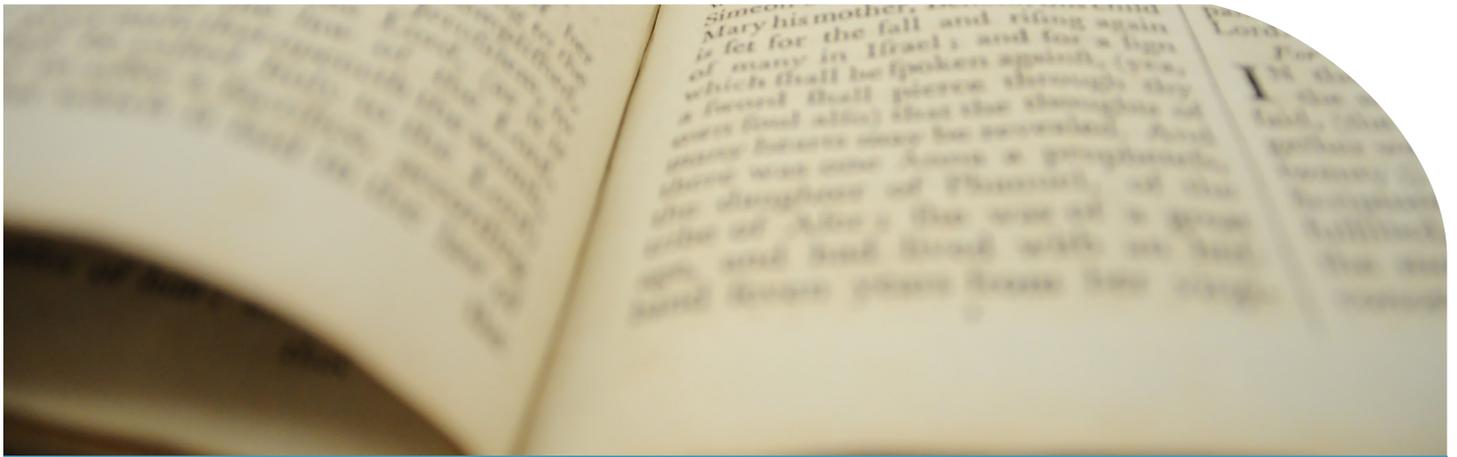
We have worked with partner charities and organisations to tell the story of how the good news of Jesus Christ is relevant for today. Working with the charity 'Oasis' we hosted a talk with Steve Chalke MBE, on the 'Lost message of Paul' - promoting the way the gospel narrative builds bridges between otherwise fractured communities.



The gift from artist Sue Symons, of a second collection of Diptychs (named 'Let my people go') has greatly enhanced our ability, with the first collection, to communicate the wider context of the gospel message from the scriptures - new and Old Testament.

We worked with 'Home for Good', 'Send a Cow' and 'Bath Mind' to tell stories of fostering and adoption, farming in Africa and supporting good mental health - in each case





TELLING - Proclaiming the Gospel

these charities are putting into action the good news declared by Jesus Christ.

The annual 2019 Harvest Supper was a sit down meal for 90 people in the newly restored East end of the Abbey, with food provided by Bath Mind's 'Food for Thought' programme. Those present were treated to a presentation on the eco-challenges of loss of biodiversity and soil degradation, stories which often remain in the shadow of global warming.

With the Covid-19 pandemic putting the city and Abbey into lockdown, resources have been channelled into the online opportunities to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. The Abbey's ministry team has consistently delivered, with the

support of the communications department, a daily Thought for the Day, six days a week. This has reached a wide audience and has been especially appreciated by those who live alone or who enjoy the stimulation of multi-faceted approaches to telling the gospel story - using for example the witness of Christian saints, the arts, poetry, technology and story-telling.

Pre-recorded services created during lockdown enabled us to tell the gospel story using multiple voices, including those of our overseas partners and to reach a wider audience - with a regular audience of over 200 households, including three from the USA and one in Japan.

The live-streaming of services from the Abbey since July 2020 has given

us the means to share the gospel story with a wide audience using the medium of the Abbey's choral music, the liturgy of the Eucharist and the preaching of scripture.

The challenge for the Abbey as and when the effects of the pandemic recede, is to continue to harness the benefits of these new opportunities, holding together older and newer ways of telling the good news of Jesus Christ.

Revd Stephen Girling
Abbey Missioner





TRANSFORMING - Pursuing justice & peace in society

Mission Support

For a number of years, the Abbey has been in the very fortunate position of being able to pledge that a percentage of our income received would be sent to good causes, at home and abroad. In addition to this, the other part of our charitable giving has been possible due to the wonderful response to our annual Pentecost Appeal by our own Abbey community. We are so grateful for their thought and generosity in supporting our beneficiaries in this way.

We have over the years built up good relations with a number of organisations and agencies such as Genesis, DHI, Christians against Poverty and Focus Counselling that look after people in difficulty for various reasons in the local community. We are very happy to have made these connections and to be able to support them in the modest way that we do. Further afield, we are linked with projects in Togo and southern India. In Togo we are linked with Wycliffe Bible Translators. In January, several of us also, from the Abbey went to Reaching the

Unreached in Tamil Nadu. This charity cares for many orphaned children but it works also in other ways in the rural, poor communities in that region. We also have relations with the church in Zambia, and the oppressed church in Palestine through the organisation, Sabeel-Kairos.

It is so valuable to us, for some in particular, personally, but also as a community to see, learn and be able to share our experience of situations in which others much less fortunate may find themselves. To be able to see and because we can, to respond and through doing so, to know of the pain and suffering of some and the relief and joy of others.

What a privilege. We learn far, far more than we are able to give.

After all, we should never ourselves take that for granted for 'All good things come from you'.

James Playfair
Chair, Mission Support Group

Footprint Project - adapting our buildings for mission

We have seen steady and positive progress on Footprint over the past year and the project continues in its core aims to ensure that the Abbey is equipped to serve as a centre for worship and community for generations to come.

We are now in the final stages of work within the Abbey, with the re-laying of the ledgerstones beginning in October. Once complete, we will be able to experience the Abbey from a fresh perspective – from the beautiful new lighting, to the carefully conserved historic floor.

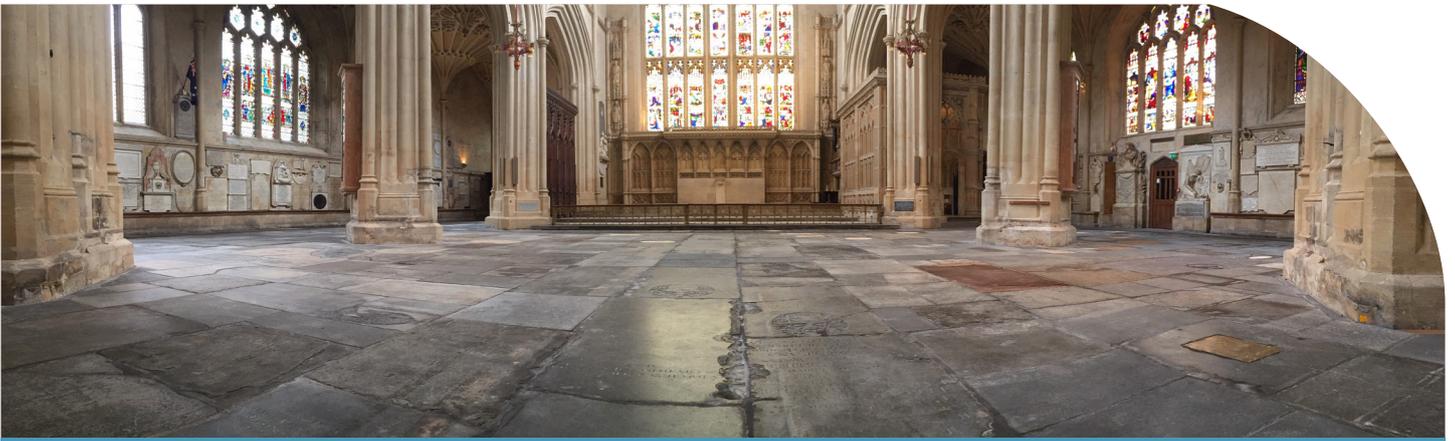
The new Learning Space and Discovery Centre will be ready to open next summer, providing new spaces to enable us to tell the inspirational story of the Abbey.

Later this autumn, we will be opening the Choir School. This exceptional new facility will support the Abbey's excellent reputation in music, as well as enabling the music team to develop singing talent throughout the region.

The new environmentally-friendly heating system, which utilises Bath's hot spring water, will now be installed and commissioned in early 2021.

Nathan Ward
Footprint Project Director





THANK YOU - For the support of the Footprint Project

We are extremely grateful for the generous financial support Footprint has received from benefactors across the community, including the Abbey's congregation, local philanthropists, regional and national Trusts and Foundations, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. We are thankful to all those who support this visionary project.

Footprint's Supporting Trusts & Foundations



The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and:-

- 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- Allchurches Trust
- Annett Trust
- Bath Abbey Music Society
- Bath Boules Charitable Trust
- Brownsword Charitable Foundation
- Coles-Medlock Foundation
- Fairfield Charitable Trust
- Friends of Bath Abbey
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Gatliff Trust
- Grace Dieu Charitable Trust
- Hobson Charity
- J & P Benson Trust
- Kirby Laing Foundation
- Layton Trust
- Linbury Trust
- Lord Barnby's Foundation
- Peter Stormonth Darling Charitable Trust
- Ray Harris Charitable Trust
- Restore Our Planet
- Roper Family Charitable Trust
- Sandra Le Marchant Trust
- Stephen Clark 1957 Charitable Trust
- Swire Charitable Trust
- Trevor Osborne Charitable Trust
- Wolfson Foundation
- World Heritage Site Enhancement Fund





TEACHING - Growing as followers of Jesus

Schools' Singing Programme and Melody Makers

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Bath Abbey's Schools' Singing Programme (SSP) and Melody Makers (MMs). This year has seen over 1200 children benefit from the SSP and MMs and both are full for the tenth year running (40 children representing 13 schools). This work is a vital part of our mission and brings together communities, families and children as well as musically educating the children who take part in the various concerts and events. We are presently devising ideas to get the children of our city singing their hearts out once again.

Shean Bowers
Assistant Director of Music



Youth and Families

I was appointed in October and was delighted to hear from the families and our wonderful Junior Church leaders about all that had been happening historically and their hopes for the future.

To help build community we had a family ramble and picnic which was great fun and all the myriad Christmas services with a starring role from Dermott the donkey!

We re-launched the Anchor girls choir youth group on a Monday evening and worked with the team which helped put together the Easter experience – we had one school visit before lockdown descended!

Overnight families ministry went online. We produced an Easter Garden themed presentation every day through Holy Week and then every Sunday until the school holidays.

Zoom quizzes have been a great success for both the boys and girls choirs and we ended the term with a girls choir picnic in Parade Gardens

Tim Norton
Youth and Families Minister



TEACHING - Growing as followers of Jesus

Interpretation & Events

Between January 2019 and April 2020, over 3,800 people took part in on and off-site events that gave better access to and interpretation of our heritage.

Highlights included:

- local universities and the Holburne Museum's Gardener's Lodge Art Group creating over

70m sq of artwork for the Phase 2 internal hoarding.

- 27 trained volunteer guides giving 871 hours to deliver 198 Behind the Scenes tours to 1,480 participants (631 of whom held a BANES Discovery Card), raising £5,315 for Footprint.
- 71 volunteers giving 615 hours to record the inscriptions on the Abbey's 891 historic ledger stones.

Thank you to all the participants and especially the volunteers.

In 2019, at least 293 volunteers donated at least 7,859 hours in roles identified in the Footprint Project Activity Plan.

Oliver Taylor
Head of Interpretation, Learning & Engagement





TENDING - Caring as a church family

Pastoral Care

It is quite difficult sometimes to think back to a time of normality as we knew it but we hope and pray that those days will return.

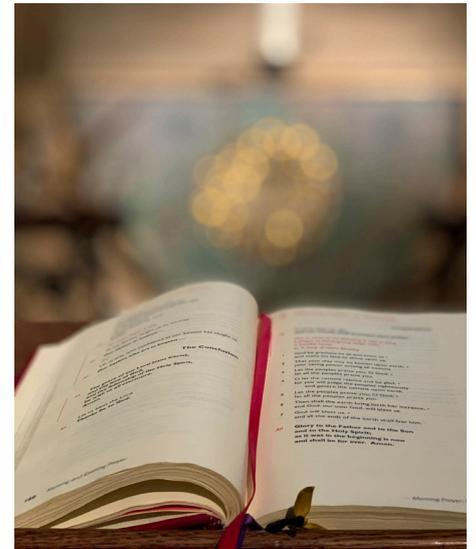
Prior to March 2020 our pastoral care continued as normal and I am extremely grateful for the ministries of those on the Pastoral Care Team, the Home Group and Contact Group Leaders and Home Communion Visitors.

We are indebted to the 24 Contact Group Leaders who became our vital

pastoral links to all of us locked down in our homes, forwarding the emailed Abbey Community Newsletter to those online or delivering printed copies to those not in touch by email.

We are delighted to have Revd Chantal Mason as our Abbey Pastor, filling the third stipendary post on the clergy team. We pray that her ministry at the Abbey will be a blessing to us all.

Liz Westbrook
Pastoral Care Co-ordinator





TENDING - Caring as a church family

Safeguarding

Recognising the importance of Safeguarding, the Abbey continues to follow the Safeguarding Policy promulgated by the Diocese; adoption of that Policy being ratified by each new PCC.

All staff and volunteers are employed using Safer Recruitment Procedures, including the requirement for Disclosure and Barring System (DBS) clearance where their role so requires and appropriate

Safeguarding training. During this reporting period, 70 DBS clearances or re-clearances were obtained.

Detailed risk assessments were undertaken for all children's activities, especially visits away.

The Abbey also provided Safeguarding services to St. Michael's Without.

Derek Smith
Safeguarding Officer





TREASURING - Sustaining and renewing

Volunteering

I joined the Abbey team in November 2019 and have been continually impressed by the volunteering offer here, and the warm welcome and culture created by the volunteers themselves. There is real enthusiasm for developing the volunteer experience, with new opportunities and fresh ideas designed and tested together.

Since March 2020 our volunteers have risen to Covid-19 related

challenges magnificently. We stayed in touch with weekly messages throughout lockdown, and in July and August the structure and changes to returning roles were informed by volunteer consultations. We can only thank all volunteers for their help, resilience, and good humour throughout.

Mary Wickenden
Volunteers Officer

Time & Talents

Scripture calls us to use what we've been given to wisely serve others (1 Peter 4:10) so money, alongside our time and gifts, should always be a means to an end and not an end in itself. We are each responsible for considering what we have, keeping what we need and giving the rest away (one suggestion is that we give away 10% of our income and half of that through the local Church). However, it is down to each of us to prayerfully consider what our part is and what we can contribute – this is the essence of Stewardship within the church. If you have any questions and/or would like to talk confidentially about this, please seek out John Barnes for Planned Giving or Liz Westbrook for Legacies.

David Grendon
Treasurer



Please visit www.bathabbey.org/support-us for information on Planned Giving, including contact details for John Barnes and Liz Westbrook.



TREASURING - Sustaining and renewing

Green Tourism

After successfully gaining the Bronze Green Tourism Award in 2018 we are continuing work to improve our green credentials.

In 2019 we began a partnership with The Recycled Candle Company who collect our candle waste and recycle it into new candles.

This Summer we have taken part in Transition Bath's 'Ride to Work' scheme which aims to encourage commuters to switch to cycling in

preference of commuting short distances by car.

We continue to work on reducing our use of paper and many of our Visitor Experience Team are now using tablets rather than printed material to engage with our visitors, we are immensely grateful to the Friends of Bath Abbey for funding this project.

Sarah Fielding
Head of Visitor Services





ABBEY FAMILY

Thank you to our congregation, volunteers, chaplains & staff

What an extraordinary time..... phases of the Footprint project and a world wide pandemic have given us a backdrop for worship, meetings, activities, welcoming visitors which either happened virtually or not at all.

We must express our sincere thanks to many volunteers - our team of Deputy Wardens, Sunday worship support, coffee team, creche and children's groups, bellringers, family support for members of our choirs and Melody Makers, Chaplains, PCC members, members of various committees - personnel, finance, Footprint project board, mission support group.

The church building has moved and is moving from one phase to another and we as people who regularly use it - congregation, weekday and Sunday volunteers, operations team, members of the clergy have had to move with these phases, adapting our worship space according to what is available.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience and tolerance as we reached new low temperatures last winter. We revelled in the warmth of the floor once it was switched on!

With a severely reduced floor space for any large services there was the necessity to adapt how we choreographed some of them. Those who were at the Advent service will recall the imaginative way in which the choir moved from one available space to another.

We were able to host a smaller but still significant Remembrance Day service for the city and numerous shoppers' carol services which last year were for the first time held on weekdays as well as Saturdays. There

was appreciation from those living in the city that they could attend these rather than braving the Christmas market crowds on Saturdays.

We now anticipate the completion of Footprint and an eventual combatting of the virus so that the Abbey's every day life can return to a 'new normal'

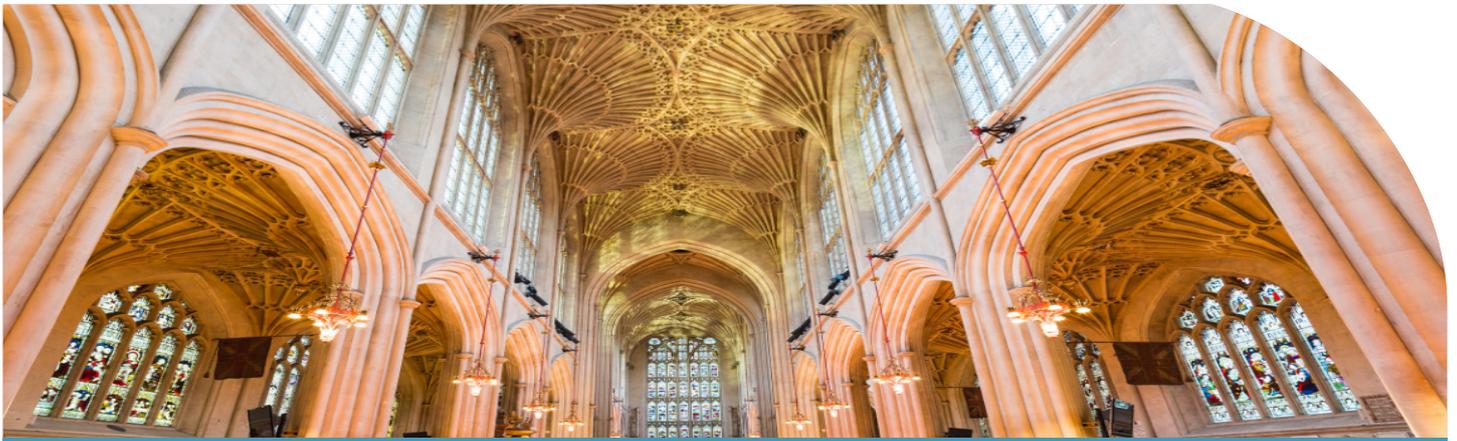
Liz Westbrook and James Playfair
Churchwardens





BATH ABBEY: WHO WE ARE





COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

2019 was another significant year of change and challenge for the Abbey.

During 2019:

- The Footprint Project moved from Phase 1 in the East end into Phase 2 in the North side of the Abbey. Three sides of the Abbey remain wrapped in hoarding as was a third of the Abbey Floor inside;
- We had to install temporary heating in the Abbey through the 2019 winter and the construction noise through the summer months was very loud;
- We aborted our plans to purchase Abbey Chambers and instead focus our finances on completing the Footprint Project;
- We said a sad farewell to: Alix (Footprint Project Director) Keri (Footprint Team); Gwen (Footprint); Adam (Operations); Debbie (HR); Sarah-Jane (Finance); Susanna (Visitor Services) and; Jane (Curate);
- And gave a warm welcome to: Natalie (HR); Sarah (Finance); Jess (Visitor Services); Mary (Footprint); Tim (Youth & Families Minister) and Polly (Footprint).
- Despite these significant changes and challenges we are pleased to report that;
- Our visitor numbers increased by an impressive 10% to 517,000 in 2019 - a new record;
- Bath Spa University, UWE and the Holborne Museum designed

hoarding and visual displays explaining the Footprint Project and we were able to showcase Sue Symons delightful Diptychs;

- Visitor Income amounted to £765k (down 4% on 2018) and the net contribution from Visitor Services amounted to £641k (down 7% on 2018). Income was down due to more floor being behind hoarding, groups entering without making donations and higher levels of noise especially in busy periods. Unfortunately, our average visitor donation (AVD) remained low at £1.47. That said, at the end of 2019 we introduced a visitor experience training programme and action plan, and as a result, in 2020 we have seen the AVD rise sharply to £1.90.
- Shop sales held up at £375k for the year and the shop's net contribution amounted to £85k while Tower Tours net contribution increased to £81k.

The extensive Footprint works in the Abbey meant that through 2019 there were very few weddings, concerts, no involvement in Party in the City and no graduations. Our Abbey Lettings and Concert Income therefore reduced massively to £48k in 2019, whereas pre-Footprint this would be well in excess of £120kpa.

Overall, despite Visitor Services, our Shop and Tower Tours performing relatively well in the circumstances, we incurred an Operational Deficit of £338k for the year (after some large exceptional costs being incurred such as: £72k costs relating to Abbey Chambers; £42k VAT not recovered under partial exemption; £40k unbudgeted professional fees (recruitment, bank & legal). That said, we had budgeted around £150k in our reserves for 2019 to cover some of the deficit due to disruption costs and in 2020 we have been able to recover the VAT that we were unable to reclaim in 2019.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge THANK YOU to our superb teams of staff and volunteers (both past and present) for your unwavering support and contribution to the Abbey and for continuing to be resilient, positive and adaptable throughout this difficult year.

Frank Mowat
Executive Director

"Our visitor numbers increased by an impressive 10% to 517,000 in 2019 - a new record."



IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

We cannot let the Annual Review pass, without making some mention to the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic that ensued, weeks after our year end. Following the wettest February on record, in March the global Coronavirus pandemic crisis started to impact on Bath Abbey. On 23 March 2020 we closed the Abbey following guidance from the House of Bishops and UK Government.

- We had to close to visitors just at the point when our peak trading season was about to start. When we re-opened, 15 weeks later on 6 July, our visitor services and shop capacity fell dramatically due to social distancing. Visitor numbers in 2020 are expected to be around 30% of the levels seen in 2019;
- Construction work on our Footprint Project ceased on 27 March and restarted a month later. However social distancing and supply chain issues have meant that the Footprint Project has been delayed by a further 2 months. Completion is now expected by May 2021;
- The services we provided during lockdown were online rather than in the Abbey. Choirs were not permitted between March-September 2020. Since lockdown our congregation has been limited to 60, and wedding groups and funeral groups to 30 attendees;
- We have had to invest in and train staff and volunteers in sanitisation, visitor flow, the wearing of masks and visors, removal of welcome leaflets, and managing queues outside the Abbey;
- Between March-September 2020 we furloughed staff and zero-hour workers and claimed successfully on the UK Government Job Retention Scheme;
- All costs have been reviewed and wherever possible reduced;
- A survival plan accompanied by revised projections has been drawn up for 2020 and through to 2026. This plan has been shared with key stakeholders and is being implemented;
- We have successfully negotiated a financial support package from the Diocese of Bath & Wells that we believe will enable our core operations to survive through this pandemic;
- We have entered discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and our bankers Nat West, asking them for financial support to enable us to complete the Footprint Project in 2021. These discussions have been positive and supportive however they have not yet concluded;
- We continue to approach donors, Trusts and Foundations to seek

additional support;

- We have kept all stakeholders informed and updated including our PCC.

We believe that the Abbey will survive financially with the support of the Diocese financial package and the additional grant facilities currently being negotiated with the NLHF.

Frank Mowat
Executive Director

The pandemic has forced us to review the worshipping and pastoral life of the Abbey. With more online and live-streamed content, homeworking, Zoom courses and meetings and more bespoke pastoral care, we are being forced to carefully consider what a 'new normal' will look like for the ministry and mission of the Abbey. The Abbey has survived many crises in its history, we believe this particular crisis will lead to a (sometimes) gentle and (sometimes) radical morphing of the means by which we live and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

BathAbbey

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