

Footprint Newsletter, February 2021

A MESSAGE FROM OUR RECTOR



Welcome to our latest Footprint news, hot off the press from Bath Abbey – indeed getting hotter by the day!

Not only is the floor of our beautiful building now gloriously heated throughout, we are getting closer and closer to the exciting “Big Reveal” ... After so much of the Project being hidden behind the scenes, more and more is now coming to completion.

We are beginning to see the fruit of all the amazing vision, prayer, planning, generosity and skilled hard work poured into resourcing the future of the Abbey and its ministry.

For someone like myself, who has never before seen the Abbey building without hoardings in place, inside as well as out, the beauty of our renewed worship space is simply overwhelming.

The new Song School, meeting rooms, office space and interpretation programme will transform what we are able to offer not just to our own Abbey congregation, but to the city we serve and its visitors.

Please watch out for a programme of Footprint opening and celebration events, due to take place in the Summer and Autumn as Covid-19 restrictions allow, and as each new part of the building work is complete.

And then ... let’s look forward with even greater anticipation, as we discover where God’s footprints are leading us out in mission and service!

Canon Guy Bridgewater
Rector of Bath Abbey

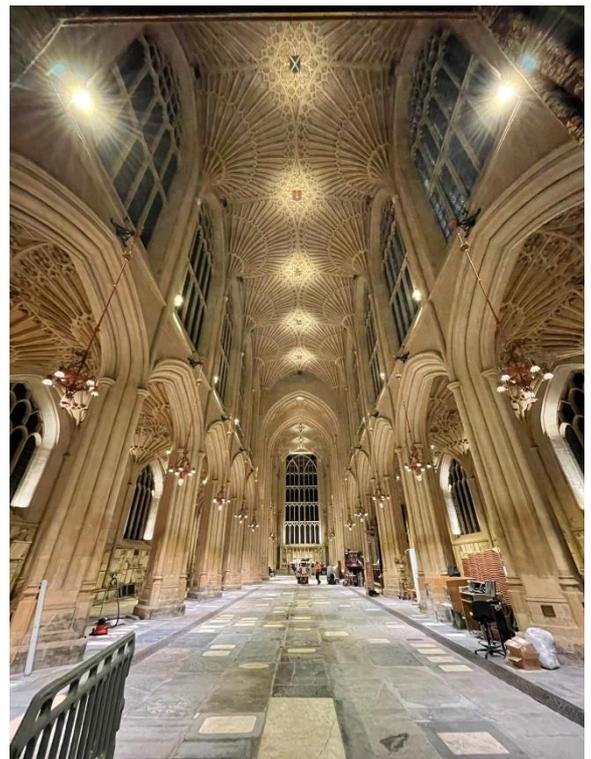
Footprint is transforming Bath Abbey, and a transformed Bath Abbey is vital for the renewed future of our community.

Thank you for your support of this visionary project.

SUPPORTING FOOTPRINT

As we approach completion, we would like to provide you with an update on Footprint funding. First off is a massive THANK YOU to you all. Despite everything, our congregation and Abbey family have continued to provide magnificent support – with Trusts, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Covid-related recovery funds all contributing substantial funds.

Situations encountered as work has progressed, such as the Waller tomb and the vast array of archaeological finds, together with the inevitable time delays from shutdowns and restricted working practices, have led to increases in the contract period and cost.



We expect to complete Footprint this Autumn (2021) at a cost of £20.7 Million; an increase of £1.4 Million since 2016. We have funds or binding commitments of £20.3 Million leaving £400,000 required to complete the project. Happily, we are fully funded as this can be met, if necessary, from a committed bank loan.

Whilst we are overwhelmed with all that you have already given and aware of the many worthy competing causes for your support, should you wish to help the Abbey avoid any borrowing, donations are most welcome!

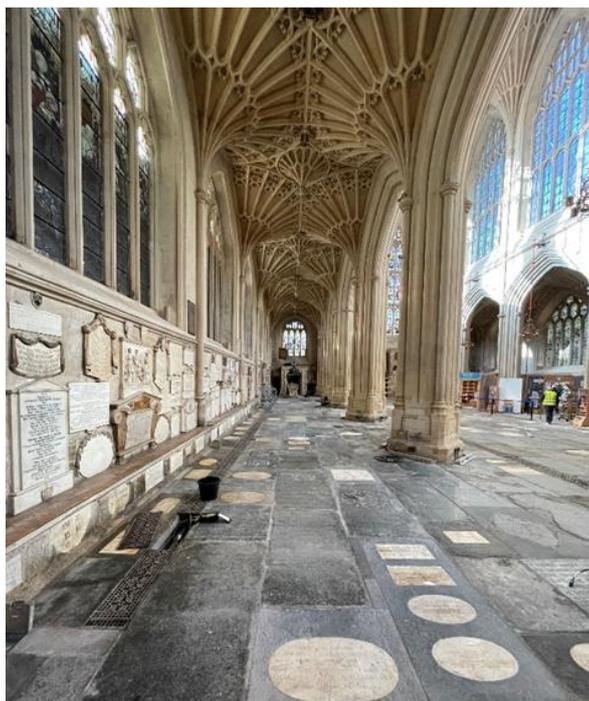
For a confidential discussion about supporting Footprint, get in touch with Cath Foxwell, our Development Manager, using cfoxwell@bathabbey.org. Alternatively, you can donate securely through the Bath Abbey website via this link:

www.bathabbey.org/donations/footprint/

A final note of thanks to the Brownsword Charitable Foundation for the £500,000 they have pledged to the Footprint matchfund. While this will come to an end soon, there is still time to make sure that any gift you make now will be doubled and have twice the impact on Footprint.



AS GOOD AS NEW! THE ABBEY FLOOR IS NOW FULLY RESTORED...



Hurrah! We can't wait to welcome you back to the new-look Abbey with its fully restored floor, open layout and new underground complex.

The hoardings in the Abbey have been removed and the historic floor is now safe and secure again, following almost three years of work by Emery and SSH Conservation, as well as other contractors, staff and volunteers, who have helped to complete this huge task. It is estimated that specialist heritage contractor SSH Conservation spent more than 20,000 hours on the restoration and relaying of the ledgerstones alone!

Felix Emery from Emery Bros. Ltd said: "We have been working on restoring the Abbey floor for nearly three years and in that time have lifted over 2,000 floor stones and shifted tens of thousands of tonnes of excavated earth and stone - all of this by hand. The whole team are really pleased that once the work's completed work, we can hand back over the Abbey to the Church and its congregation, and once it's safe to do so, reopen to the public so locals and visitors to the city can appreciate our efforts restoring this beautiful church."

A LOOKBACK AT OUR LEDGERSTONES PROJECT



A vital part of the floor restoration was capturing and recording all the ledgerstones (inscribed floor slabs), over 890 of them!

A very big thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who quite literally got down on their hands and knees to help us with this. These include members of the congregation, Abbey volunteers and groups such as BEMSCA, NADFAS and U3A, all of whom attended essential training by the Churches Conservation Trust. We are also grateful to students from UWE Bristol and Bath School of Art and Design.

It has been an amazing experience to uncover, clean and record these stones which have been hidden for nearly 150 years. The stories contained in the Abbey's ledgerstones of people who lived and worked within the parish, as well as visitors who came to Bath to use the spa waters in the 18th and 19th centuries, will play an important role in our interpretation plans as part of the Footprint project.

THE FINAL PIECE IN THE PUZZLE...

Those who've been in the Abbey recently will have noticed it's distinctly warmer. The good news is, it's about to warm up even more in the next couple of weeks! Our new and much anticipated eco-heating system using energy from Bath's hot springs is scheduled to be switched on mid-March. As the underfloor heating pipes and the plant room for all the associated mechanical and electrical equipment are now ready, all that is left to do now is the trickiest part of the works, down in the Roman Drain.



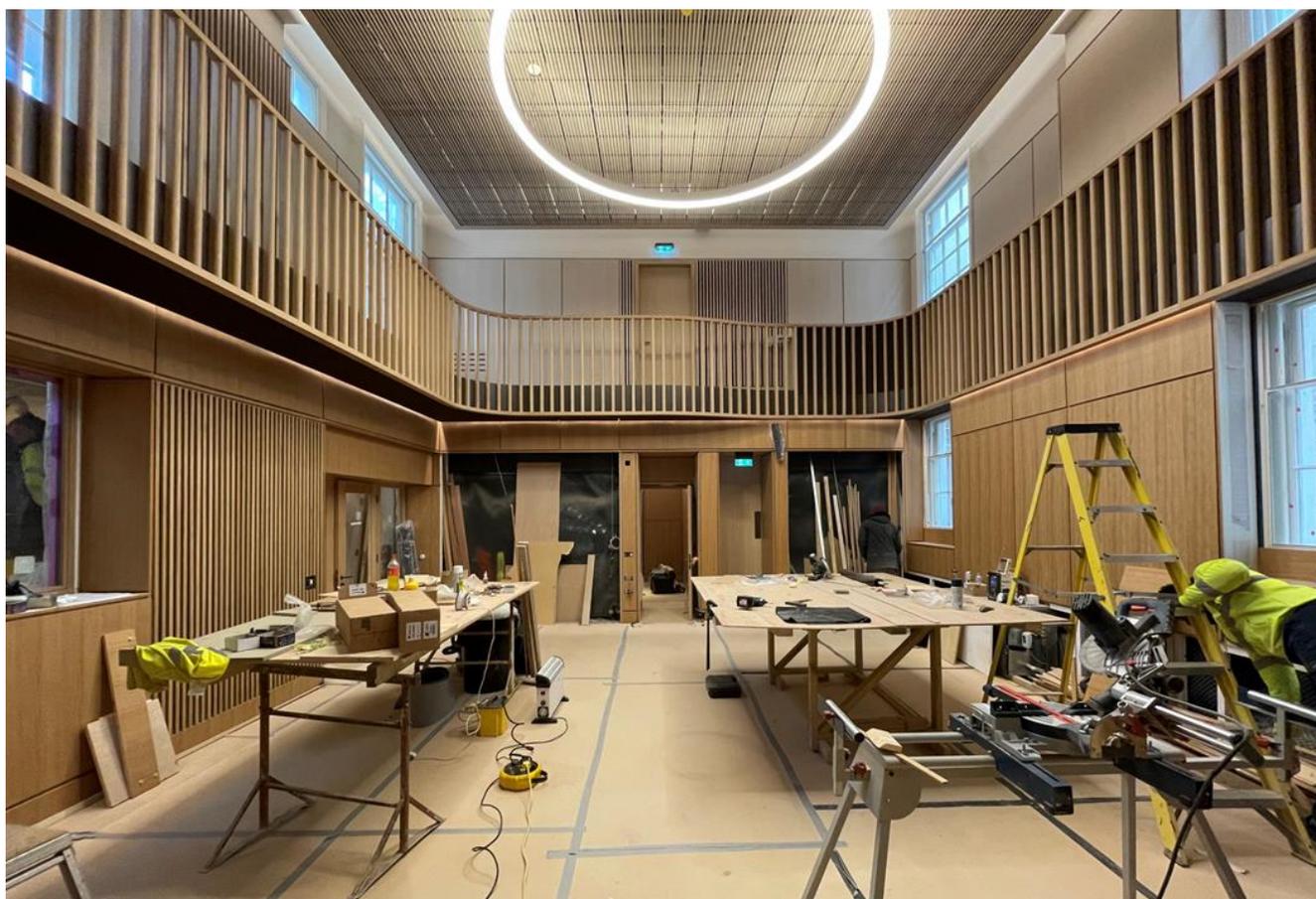
Renewable energy firm, Isoenergy, has just about finished installing a world's-first heat collection system in the Roman Drain beneath York Street – the final piece in the puzzle to get the Abbey's new eco-heating system working. This includes ten custom-built EnergyBlade heat exchangers that will collect heat from the thermal spring water that flows through the drain. Every day there is around 1.1 million litres of hot water flowing from the Roman Baths and down into the river, which stays a constant 40°C all year round. Energy will be extracted from this water to produce enough energy to heat the Abbey as well as Kingston Buildings.

Edward Levien, Commercial Director at Isoenergy, said: "We're very proud of our work on this heat pump project, understood to be the first of its kind, which will source its energy from Bath's world-famous hot springs. Working in the Roman Drain's humid and confined environment brought a new set of challenges for our engineers. We had to do the work in short 20-minute sections as that is as long as a person can safely and effectively work down there.

What's more, we could only get all the equipment down into the drain through a manhole inspection cover on York Street, and it all then had to be lowered the ~7m to the floor of the Great Drain.

"However, these are all minor inconveniences when we consider this remarkable achievement - we're very proud of our team and how hard they've worked to deliver this system that'll enable the Abbey to be heated with sustainable and low-carbon energy for generations to come."

WE CAN'T WAIT TO WELCOME BACK OUR ABBEY CHOIRS TO THEIR NEW HOME



It has been such a challenging year for our Choirs, full of stop starts, yet they have managed to continue to produce beautiful and moving music when it most mattered. We are so pleased that immediately after Easter, we will be able to welcome back Huw, Shean, the Choir and the Melody Makers to the brand-new Song School (that is, of course, once Covid-19 regulations permit choirs to gather again in person.) While we are very grateful to Revd Roger Driver and St Michael's Without for giving our Choirs a temporary home while the new Song School's been in development, we have missed having our Choirs in the Abbey.

Located in Kingston Buildings, the Choir's new purpose-built home, which will be connected to the Abbey through an underground corridor, will feature a number of upgrades to their previous one (which also doubled up as the Abbey kitchen, a storage space and volunteers' break room!).



Huw Williams, Bath Abbey's Director of Music, said: "The Abbey choirs are very excited to see the completion of the Footprint project. Having been nomadic without our choir room for over 12 months, we are really looking forward to settling into our new Song School. As well as having plenty of light, and good ventilation the specially designed acoustics will inspire us in our daily work.

Alongside the main Song School will be the new music office and two dedicated vestries for the adult lay-clerks and the choristers which will be used for robing and relaxing. These glorious spaces will also be used by visiting musicians and choirs performing in the Abbey. The choristers' vestry will have a piano offering us a new flexibility – enabling us to rehearse smaller groups and soloists separately from the main room. The music library, with its thousands of music scores, will be stored in the Song School in specially built cupboards with acoustically designed doors to create an ideal rehearsing acoustic."

DISCOVERY CENTRE, LEARNING SPACE AND ABBEY SHOP

While we can now enjoy a newly clear and heated Abbey floor (when allowed!), work is still continuing at pace just behind the South Aisle door. The new Abbey Shop will eventually return to its home in the Jackson Extension, although this is still several months away – for the time being the shop will be relocating to a ‘new’ temporary home in the South Aisle.



We are progressing the design work and fit-out of the Discovery Centre, housed in our newly formed Vaults level beneath the Shop. The new Vaults should be ready to enjoy by the Autumn and will provide access to our new Learning Space, which will support our schools education programme.

ONGOING FOOTPRINT WORK



The next phase of works in the Abbey are now underway. Following the completion of the floor repairs and installation of the underfloor heating, we are now completing the installation of the new data and sound systems, including monitors and cameras to support our online services and remote broadcasts.

The new LED lighting is being setup throughout February ahead of the installation of the original Corporation Stalls. The Stalls are due to come back to the Abbey in April, which will unfortunately create a little disruption while they are reassembled throughout April and May.

We will also be continuing our conservation work throughout the Abbey over the coming months, repairing numerous memorials and cleaning stonework – as well as some much needed roof repairs!

A huge amount of work has been carried out by everyone involved. We are so grateful to our fantastic team of staff, contractors and volunteers, not to mention our Abbey community for your support. While the Abbey is currently closed for public worship and visiting while we are in lockdown, we cannot wait to welcome everyone back once it is safe to do so and hope you'll be able to truly experience and benefit from all the wonderful work that has gone into Footprint over the last few years.

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