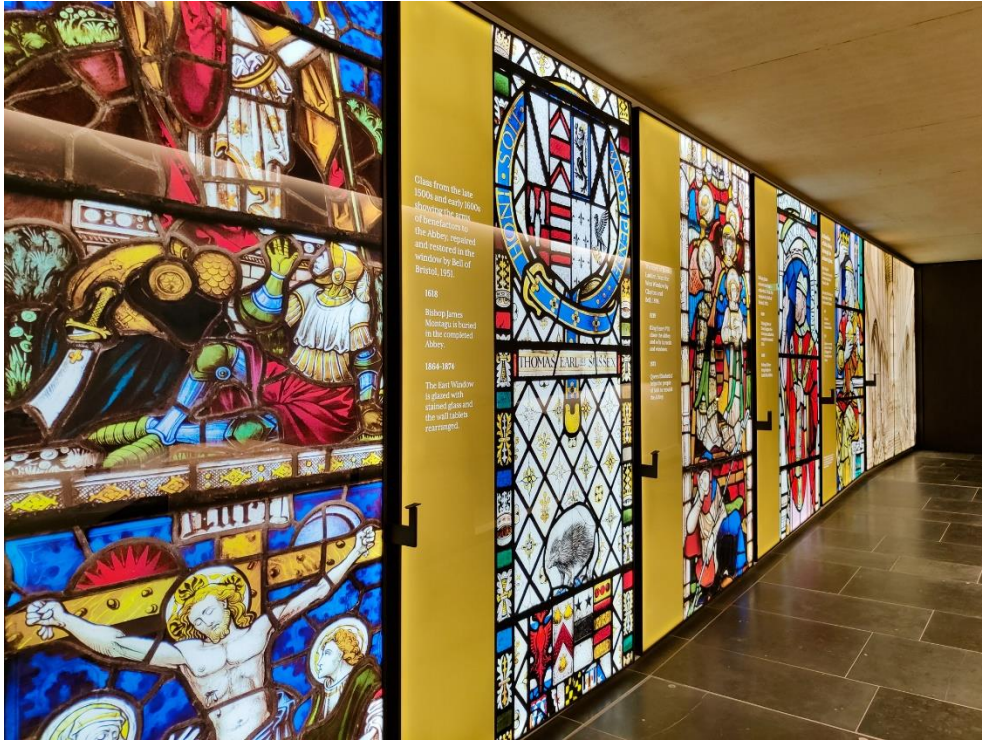


Bath Abbey

Footprint Newsletter, June 2023



Illuminated panels in the Abbey's new Discovery Centre

Welcome to the latest edition of the Footprint Newsletter, bringing you up-to-date on Footprint Project developments

In this issue, you'll learn more about the **brand-new Discovery Centre**, which has already received thousands of visitors since opening in March. You'll also find out about Footprint's **innovative Learning Programme** and the wide range of fascinating activities delivered this year which engage schools, families, and our local community with Abbey life. **An update from Footprint's Project Director** rounds out this exciting edition, sharing insights on the Footprint journey as we head into the final stages of the project.

We are so grateful for the support given to Bath Abbey's transformational Footprint Project

The Footprint vision has been brought to life because of generous donations from the Abbey's congregation, The Friends of Bath Abbey, Bath Abbey Music Society, the local community, Trusts and Foundations, philanthropists, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

THANK YOU

The Discovery Centre: Bringing the Abbey's History to Life

The custom-built Discovery Centre represents the final stage of delivering the Abbey's transformational Footprint Project. On 7th March 2023, we were delighted to open the doors of this extraordinary space to the public.

Medieval carved stone fragments displayed in the new Discovery Centre



This brand-new heritage centre, constructed within the ancient vaults beneath the Abbey, displays precious objects from the Abbey's archives.

A showcase of medieval tiles excavated in the 1860s, similar to those found in situ beneath the Abbey floor during the Footprint excavations

In addition to these treasures, fascinating videos, replica period costumes and exciting interactive exhibits immerse visitors in the history of this extraordinary building and enable them to explore the remarkable stories of people connected to the Abbey.

An example of the dynamic interpretation of Abbey history available to visitors in the new Discovery Centre: The "Write Like A Monk" interactive exhibit (pictured right) is proving extremely popular with visitors of all ages!





Families are learning more about the Abbey's fascinating history whilst having great fun dressing up in the Discovery Centre's wide range of replica period costumes



Alongside an extensive timeline of the Abbey's history, historical artefacts, some of which have never been seen by the public, are on display.

These include Anglo-Saxon crosses, medieval carved stone fragments, historic silver, and the Benefactors' Book - a record of money and materials given to the Abbey for its reconstruction after the Reformation.



A view of the new Discovery Centre, with precious medieval stonework seen on the right

Welcoming Thousands of Visitors to the New Discovery Centre

In the first two months following the Discovery Centre opening, we welcomed thousands of visitors through its doors – **27,000 visitors, in fact!** And in the first month of opening, we welcomed 16,645 visitors to the Discovery Centre, which is 44% of the Abbey's visitor total for that month.

We're thrilled that the Discovery Centre is **already proving to be a major attraction for visitors from the local, national, and international community.** Feedback tells us that our visitors love the 'Bath Abbey Through Time' animation, the 'Write Like a Monk' interactive display, getting hands-on with the Medieval Tile Jigsaw, dressing up in the replica period costumes, and reflecting on the 'Daily Routine of a Benedictine Monk' illustration.

**We've received some fantastic feedback from our visitors,
and are pleased to share some of these comments with you:**

"We visited your wonderful new Discovery Centre yesterday - it was so fun and educational!"

"I'm travelling in Europe [from America] visiting cathedrals and a lot of religious sites and there is a warmth here you don't find everywhere."

"The presentation is wonderful!"

"We also visit the new Discovery Centre downstairs and that helped us understand how the current building has changed since its early beginnings."

"The best explanation of any building and its archaeology I have ever seen... Better than the Vatican!"

"It was amazing ... We will come back again!"

"The Discovery Centre was a real treat which I did not expect. Very interactive and just what kids need and engage with these days. Well worth the money spent."

Engaging Schools, Families and Our Local Community: A Learning Programme Update

Our Learning Manager, Polly Andrews (pictured right) shares some wonderful images from the Abbey's exciting Learning Programme and reports on the many fascinating activities that have taken place so far this year...

Connecting with Local Schools



The new '**Christmas Secrets**' tour (pictured left) was launched, and visits included a class from Three Ways Special School, one of the Abbey's partner schools.



A tour of the remarkable '**Threads through Creation**' exhibition started in January and included a collage workshop for schools.



Freshford Primary School (pictured above and left) brought their Early Years class, who thoroughly enjoyed exploring the Abbey and the stunning, colourful panels.

Easter Experience was run once again, with six Stations of the Cross located around the Abbey.

Students, pictured right, were able to explore the meaning of the Easter Story and reflect on its importance, using interactive elements at each Station.

Fun Activities for Families

A trail-sheet encouraging families to **look closely at and learn about the Creation story** was offered as part of the 'Threads through Creation' exhibition.



A special family 'Animal Art' day was held in February where children and parents could decorate an animal with colourful fabric, inspired by the textiles on display. As seen in the pictures below, volunteers from the congregation and Bath Spa University got involved as well!





The popular **Easter Egg Trail**, pictured left, returned to the Abbey between 20th March and 16th April with 1,500 trail-sheets handed out free to visitors.



On **World Heritage Day**, which took place on 8th March, the Abbey took its replica Georgian costumes and archive items relating to doctors memorialised on our walls. As seen in the image above-right, families enjoyed trying the outfits on and hearing about the dentists and chiropodists who once ran businesses in buildings adjoining the Abbey.



To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III, a special family event took place on 8th May: **'Patriotic Printing'**. Our visiting families learned all about the Abbey's royal connections and printed a colourful poster to take away.

Reaching Out To Our Community



The Abbey's Learning Room (pictured left), nestled within the ancient underground vaults, is part of an extensive complex of new spaces created by the Footprint Project.

This brand-new Learning space provides a welcoming hub for the Abbey's outreach activities and is the perfect venue to host the Abbey's many community projects, enabling us to reach out even further into our community to provide opportunities for engagement, support, and creativity to a wide range of groups.

We're delighted to share an update on the community projects we have run so far this year...

In partnership with The Holburne Museum, we welcomed **The Gardener's Lodge Mental Health Support Group** to the Abbey throughout January and February. Eleven group members, supported by three volunteers, created beautiful embroidery rings (pictured right), inspired by the 'Threads Through Creation' exhibition.



A Warm Space (pictured above, left) has been running in the Learning Room every Tuesday lunchtime since November, welcoming anyone looking for warmth, food, or company. Generously supported by volunteers from the congregation, the Abbey's Warm Space is offered in partnership with Age UK, The University of Bath, Bath & North East Somerset Council and others. From May onwards, the Warm Space will run on the first Tuesday of each month.

We're **working in partnership with Bath Welcomes Refugees** to offer a regular English Language lesson every Friday lunchtime. We're currently welcoming 20 participants, who are supported by two teachers.



In March, **The Mayors of the Great Spa Towns of Europe** (part of the UNESCO World Heritage Partnership), received a special tour by the Abbey's Rector, Reverend Canon Guy Bridgewater, Nathan Ward (Footprint Project Director) and Polly Andrews (Learning Manager) to share the highlights of the Footprint Project, including the new Discovery Centre.

Despite a snowstorm, there was a great turn-out at the Abbey on 8th March for **International Women's Day**, where we offered a special day of talks called **'How the Other Half Lived'** - celebrating historic women in Bath.

This series of events shone a spotlight on fascinating women with a Bath connection, including new research by Abbey archive research volunteers revealing the lives of several Georgian women commemorated in the Abbey. Seven guest speakers spoke about women connected to Bath who deserve to be better known, such as Ruth Coard, who recorded the destruction of many buildings in Bath in the 1960s. Pauline Swaby-Wallace, Fairfield House CIC Director (pictured above) delivered a fascinating talk on Empress Menen, who was consort of the Ethiopian Empire and wife of Emperor Haile Selassie. There was also a spotlight on Bath's Suffragettes and Fanny Murray, a famous Georgian beauty and courtesan.



Learning Programme Feedback

We've had some lovely positive feedback from schoolteachers and students about our Learning Programme. Some of their kind words are shared below.

"I just wanted to thank you for a lovely morning in the Abbey yesterday. The children (and the adults!) really enjoyed the experience and we are looking forward to visiting again."

Ubley Primary School, regarding the Abbey's 'Christmas Secrets' Tour

"A huge thanks again for such a super lovely outing, it really was the most enjoyable and easy to manage yet! ... Parents have already been saying how they are looking forward to visiting the Abbey soon, so that is great to hear!"

Freshford Pre-School, regarding the 'Threads Through Creation' Tour and Workshop

"Thanks for an incredible visit to the Abbey - the children really enjoyed themselves."

St Andrew's Church School, regarding Easter Experience

"Thank you for the fantastic Easter Experience last week. My class had a great morning learning about the Easter story and also following the Easter Egg Trail."

Student from Abbot Alphege Academy

"Many thanks to you and your team for such a lovely trip to the Abbey. Our class loved the exhibition and the trail was excellent, led to some interesting observations and discussions. We all loved the peaceful and calm setting for the collage workshop and enjoyed creating pieces inspired by the exhibition."

Three Ways Special School, regarding the 'Threads Through Creation' Tour and Workshop

An Update from Footprint's Project Director

Nathan Ward brings you up-to-speed on progress as we navigate the Footprint Project's final phase

"It's incredible to experience Bath Abbey today, following the remarkable transformation delivered by the Footprint Project, and know that **the seeds of this transformation began nearly twenty years ago**. From the initial planning meetings in 2005 and 2006 through to the magnificently restored and renewed church we have today... what an amazing journey!



Photo Credit: Rich Howman

A journey made possible by the vision of the Abbey's leadership team, powered by the extraordinary generosity of our supporters – and their shared belief in what could be achieved through Footprint.



"Footprint has delivered change on a monumental scale, with the project's ambitious programme of restoration, building works and interpretation not only improving the Abbey's accessibility, sustainability and hospitality, but also creating flexibility in how we worship in the Abbey, both now and in the future – enabling the Abbey to fulfil its mission of 'Living and Telling the Good News of Jesus with

the City of Bath and its Visitors' for generations to come.

"We are so grateful for Footprint's supporters, who have gifted their time, their talents, and generous monetary donations to bring Footprint to life. The Abbey's congregation, The Friends of Bath Abbey and Bath Abbey Music Society have supported Footprint every step of the way, alongside an extensive roster of local and national Trusts and Foundations, philanthropists, the local community, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. **Thank you all!**

"We are thrilled by the recognition Footprint continues to receive and humbled to be recipients of a range of prestigious awards, including a [Civic Trust Award](#), [The AJ Architecture Award](#) (Community & Faith Category), [The WAF Award](#) (Religion Category / Highly Commended); The President's Award at the [National Church Awards](#) (see image, right); Renewable Energy Project of the Year (Highly Commended) at the [BusinessGreen Awards](#); and Bath Property Awards for Transformation and Winner of Winners.





“In terms of activities in this final phase, one of our key priorities this year is **drawing Footprint to a close in a manner that makes best use of all the remarkable resources we have created through the project.** To this end, we are undertaking a full project evaluation throughout the year, in addition to the archiving of all Footprint documentation and intellectual property for the Discovery Centre, the Learning Programme, and the Abbey’s treasured collection of artefacts. We

continue to have a strong and positive relationship with Footprint’s principal funder, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and are working closely with the NLHF team to close out and balance project budgets, ensuring that the Abbey completes Footprint without a debt burden.

“Alongside this vital work of drawing the project to a close, we are delighted to be offering regular tours of the Footprint development for our supporters and key stakeholders, and even more delighted by our supporters’ enthusiastic response when encountering the extraordinary changes they helped create through their generosity!

"In addition, **ongoing lectures, seminars and education events are being offered throughout the forthcoming months, enabling others to study Footprint and learn about the project:** in July 2023, we will be working with Footprint’s architect Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios to present the Footprint Project at the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA) conference - we will also be hosting their award ceremony at the Abbey in the Autumn. In September 2023, we will be hosting a joint seminar with South West Heritage Trust, Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society and Wessex Archaeology to offer an archaeology-focused seminar and tour of the work undertaken throughout Footprint.

“**We have also recently appointed a new Abbey Architect,** who will support the Building and Fabric Committee as we shift focus from the Footprint Project towards the care and conservation of the Abbey building. Antony Feltham-King, from St Ann's Gate Architects, will deliver a new Quinquennial condition survey of all elements of the Abbey’s structure and fabric to inform our new management and maintenance plan for the church and facilities - **ensuring we are integrating Footprint’s many outcomes into a broader masterplan for the Abbey, as part of a long-term maintenance and development strategy.**”



Photo Credit: Rich Howman

Coming Soon!



Following a successful trial in May Half-Term, **new Family and SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) 'Little Explorer' backpacks** will be available in the Abbey from the end of June.

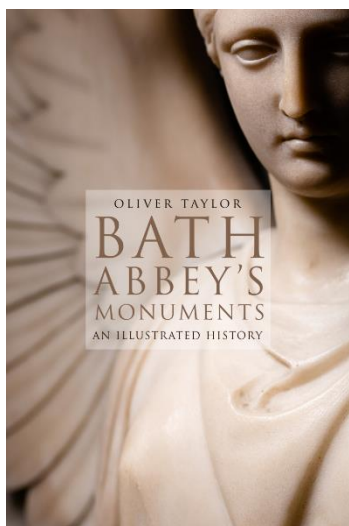
Free with admission, these backpacks (pictured left) offer families a sensory voyage of discovery around the Abbey and include a board-book of Bible stories, a mirror, and a magnifying glass.

A new website - **bathabbeymemorials.org** - will be launched in July, giving biographical details of the people commemorated over hundreds of years on the Abbey's walls and floor.

The website promises to be an invaluable resource for learning in all kinds of ways: from Volunteer Stewards using the website on tablets in the Abbey through to schools researching historical figures like Beau Nash and Admiral Arthur Philip. This website will offer a digital doorway into the Abbey's remarkable history for a brand-new worldwide audience.



Bath Abbey's Monuments – A Fascinating New Book Available From 17th August



Bath Abbey contains the largest collection of monuments in any UK church or cathedral. But how did the ruined Abbey of 1539 become a Georgian 'gallery of sculpture', where the latest works of art by famous sculptors could be seen? And why are their appearances today so different from their original designs?

Long before the city's now-celebrated museums and galleries were established, the Abbey's monuments were one of Bath's newsworthy tourist attractions. Drawing on a wealth of unpublished material on the Abbey's history, this book – authored by the Abbey's Head of Interpretation & Engagement, Dr Oliver Taylor - tells the story of its monuments for the first time; how they helped the Abbey rise from the aftermath of the Dissolution

to give it a new identity, a unique floor, and walls that tell the social history of Bath. This fascinating new book is available to buy from 17th August from the Bath Abbey Shop, Topping & Company Booksellers in Bath and online at [The History Press](http://TheHistoryPress), Foyles and WHSmith.



Photo Credit: Rich Howman

THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to our supporters, who continue to give their time, their talents, and generous donations to bring Footprint to life.

This innovative project has been made possible by our supporters' belief in the Footprint vision for Bath Abbey and we do hope this newsletter has given you an insight into all that Footprint has achieved so far this year.

If you have any questions about Footprint or would like to support the project, please get in touch with Cath Foxwell, Fundraising & Development Manager, using cfoxwell@bathabbey.org



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