

# Bath Abbey

## Footprint Newsletter, Spring 2024



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

In this issue, you'll discover:

- **A message from our Rector**, Reverend Canon Guy Bridgewater, reflecting on the remarkable Footprint journey and giving thanks for the extraordinary support Bath Abbey has received, enabling us to deliver this transformational project.
- **Fascinating images of Bath Abbey 'before, during, and after' the Footprint Project**, giving you an insight into the stunning transformation your generous support has created.
- **Footprint's Learning Programme** – find out more about how this innovative programme enables Bath Abbey to connect with even more schools, families, and community groups.
- **Results from our recent Discovery Centre visitor survey**, one year on from opening.
- **An update from Andrew Bragg, Chair of Bath Abbey's Building & Fabric Committee**, bringing you exciting news about the Abbey's next stage of development.

Photo Credit: Rich Howman

## A Message from Our Rector

The Footprint Project started life in 2005 (nearly twenty years ago!), powered by the ambition to repair the Abbey's sinking floor. This ambition quickly blossomed into a greater vision of transforming the Abbey's hospitality, accessibility, flexibility, and sustainability – and secures its future ministry for generations to come. **This innovative development project, which has been decades in the making and delivery, is now complete.**

Bath Abbey is now fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. We have a magnificent and fully accessible Nave floor, comprised of hundreds of restored ledgerstones – the beauty and adaptability of our renewed worship space is simply extraordinary. We have an innovative and sustainable underfloor heating system, powered by energy from Bath's thermal waters – helping us to reduce our energy costs and support the Church of England's goal of becoming Net Zero Carbon by 2030. We also have a remarkable new Song School, a wonderful new programme of education and interpretation supported by the new Discovery Centre and Learning Room, a new Archive Store, refurbished Abbey Shop and offices, and so much more. **These spaces have transformed what we are able to offer – not just to our own Abbey congregation, but to the city we serve and its worldwide stream of visitors.**

We can now see the fruit of the amazing vision, prayer, planning, generosity, and skilled hard work that has been poured by so many into resourcing the future of the Abbey. **Everyone who supported Footprint is part of this monumental achievement – whether you gave your time, talents, prayers, or generous donations - your commitment to the Footprint vision has brought it to life. Thank you!** With your support, Bath Abbey is freshly equipped as an oasis that refreshes lives with hospitality and fun, healing and peace – through welcoming, including and nurturing all we serve.

**Reverend Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
**Rector of Bath Abbey**



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

**The Footprint vision has been brought to life because of generous support from the Abbey's congregation and volunteers, 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 Transformation of Bath Abbey: Images from the Footprint Journey

Over the next few pages, we share some 'before, during and after' photos across the lifespan of the Footprint Project – from building site through to glorious award-winning spaces.

**Because of your support, Bath Abbey has been renewed, and these images highlight what a remarkable journey it has been.** There were undoubtedly great challenges, but through your generosity, the Abbey has been transformed.

### The Abbey's Nave



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

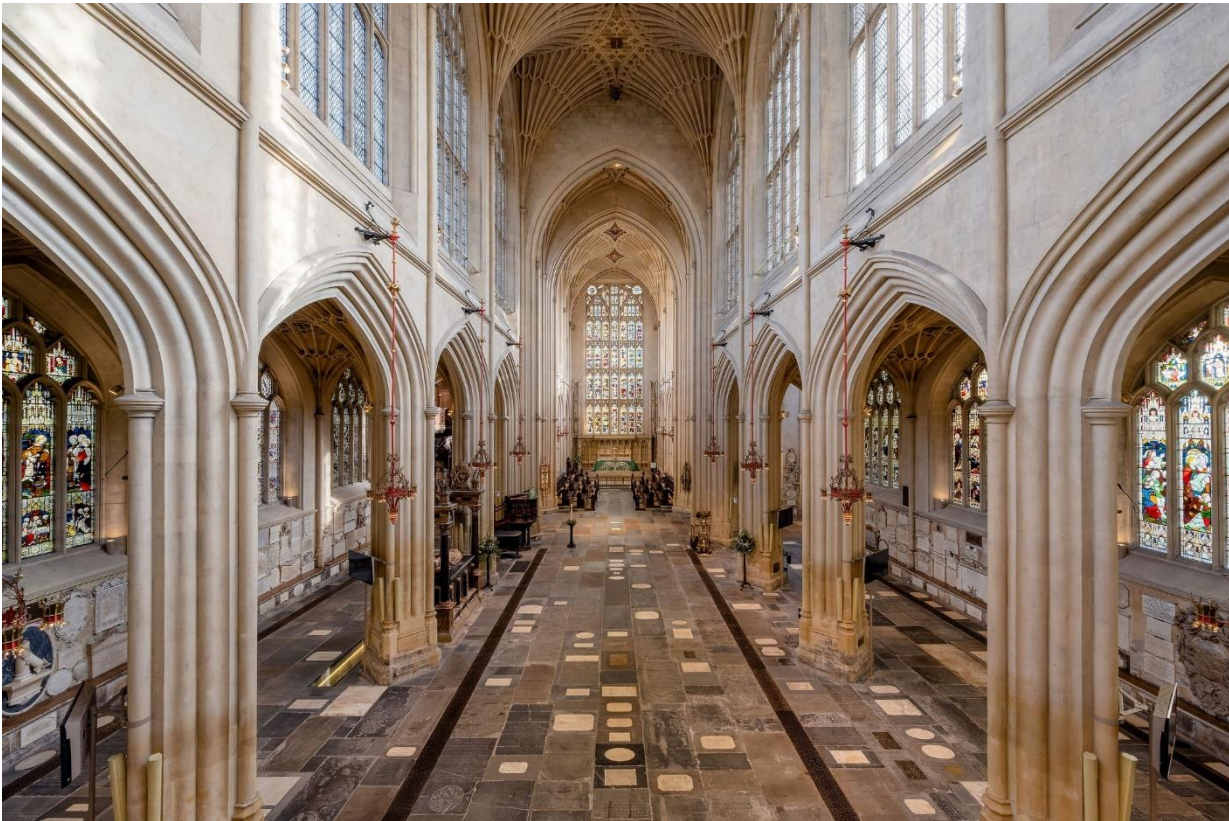


Photo Credit: Rich Howman

## The Discovery Centre

*Before...*



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

*During...*



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

*After...*



Photo Credit: ABG Design

## The Learning Room

*Before...*



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

*During...*



Photo Credit: FCBStudios



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

*After...*



Photo Credit: FCBStudios



Photo Credit: Anna Barclay

**The Song School**  
During...



Photo Credit: FCBStudios

After...



Photo Credit: Hufton + Crow



Photo Credit: Betty Bhandari

**The Song School Corridor**



Photo Credit: FCBStudios



Photo Credit: Hufton + Crow

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



*Schoolchildren and families enjoying the Abbey's new Discovery Centre*

We're thrilled to let you know that between May and December 2023, the Abbey's new Discovery Centre **received a phenomenal 80,000 visitors** – 73% of whom were visiting the Abbey for the first time. We're delighted that the Discovery Centre is **proving to be a major attraction for visitors from the local, national, and international community**.

Surveys\* conducted by our Discovery Centre evaluation volunteers revealed the following positive feedback from our visitors...

Statement	% Agreed or Strongly Agreed
I enjoyed myself	100%
I learned something new about Bath Abbey	98%
The displays were easy to follow and to understand	97%
The Discovery Centre is a welcoming place for families	94%
I would recommend a visit to a friend or family member	99%

*\*768 surveys completed*

**Your support for the innovative Footprint Project has transformed Bath Abbey**

**By giving so generously, you have helped us tell the extraordinary Abbey Story through dynamic interpretations of its history, as seen in the remarkable new Discovery Centre.**

**Thank You!**



Photo Credit: ABG Design

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

Learning Manager, Polly Andrews (pictured right), brings you news from our exciting Learning Programme...



### Connecting with Local Schools

I'm delighted to let you know that **the number of schools visiting the Abbey has been steadily rising**, with lots of students absolutely fascinated by Gaia, Luke Jerram's stunning installation of the Earth. A special Gaia tour for schools (shown below-left) helped students explore the Abbey and the Earth in greater depth, with **19 schools visiting**.

**Learning volunteers continue to be a key part of the success of our school visits.** Our marvellous volunteers, some of whom can be seen in the image below-right, support and encourage the students, enabling them to get the most of out of their Abbey experience.



The Abbey is working in partnership with [St John's Foundation](#) to provide free visits to seven target schools, including St Michael's Junior Church School in Twerton, St Keyna Primary School in Keynsham and St Mary's Primary School in Writhlington. **With the Abbey also funding transport costs, 365 students have been able to enjoy the Abbey in the last six months.**



**A new learning website called [www.BathAbbeyMemorials.org.uk](http://www.BathAbbeyMemorials.org.uk) has been launched.** This website incorporates detailed research carried out over the last eight years by the Abbey's archivist and a team of volunteers. A powerful search engine allows the user to search for any of the Abbey's 1,500 memorials and ledgerstones, including detailed biographies of key figures such as Beau Nash. It's a helpful resource for different audiences including the general public (from all over the world), schools, and for use in specialist talks and tours in the Abbey.



### Fun Activities for Families

A trail for visitors to the Gaia exhibition was offered free to all families and our new Little Explorer backpacks (pictured below-left) are proving very popular with under-5s. **Free with admission, these backpacks offer families a sensory voyage of discovery around the Abbey** and include a board book of Bible stories, a mirror and magnifying glass. Some of the packs are specially designed for children with special educational needs and disabilities.



A special session for families was trialled during the Gaia exhibition. Under-5s and their carers enjoyed songs, games and toys while sitting under Gaia with Holly Dabbs, an experienced family practitioner. It was a special and exciting experience to bring the themes of the Gaia exhibition to life for little ones, and there are plans to run more sessions this year.

Exciting eco-crafting days were offered during Gaia, with fantastically creative results. The protest banners were put on display in the Abbey itself and made a big impact.



Overall, a remarkable 1,311 family members engaged with the Gaia trail and workshops. The Learning team worked really hard and received a lot of positive feedback.



A Heritage Open Day in September offered a special opportunity to find out more about the Abbey's memorials through tours and talks about new discoveries of fascinating lives. **Once again, the Abbey's volunteers demonstrated their amazing enthusiasm and knowledge.**

## Reaching Out To Our Community

The Abbey's Learning Room 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 run...

**The Gardener's Lodge Mental Health Support Group**, in partnership with The Holburne Museum, returned in November and December, with 12 participants supported by 3 volunteers. They worked with a specialist artist to create beautiful silk paintings (pictured right), inspired by the Abbey's stained-glass windows.





**The Cosy Place**, pictured left, returned in October and will run on a weekly basis through the winter. It's a warm space with a friendly welcome, offering food and company to all. A group of four volunteers take turns to expertly prepare sandwiches and soup, while spending time chatting and listening to visitors.

**Our English language lessons, run in partnership with Bath Welcomes Refugees**, also continue every Friday lunchtime. Offering beginner- and intermediate-level teaching, we are delighted to support 20 students, whom we see in the image (right) enjoying an Abbey tour.



### Learning Programme Feedback

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

***"I just wanted to say how much the children enjoyed the Bath Abbey tour yesterday! Summer's [Abbey Visitor Experience Staff] enthusiasm and knowledge shone through, and our children were motivated by the hands-on activities throughout."***  
Roundhill Primary School,  
Bath

***"The whole session was fantastic. My child especially like the crafts, but the songs and stories were also a big hit!"***  
Feedback from the Gaia Toddler & Baby Sessions

***"The people running the event were so friendly and helpful and took the time to guide the children through the process. It was a welcome surprise as part of our visit to the Abbey."***  
Feedback from the Gaia Family Sessions

***"Thank you so much for another wonderful visit, we all really enjoyed it. Seed bombs were a great success, and we look forward to seeing any results next year!"***  
Three Ways School, Bath

## A Footprint Celebration filled with Gratitude

Bath Abbey hosted the Footprint Open Evening in September to celebrate the completion of the Footprint Project. **The Open Evening was an opportunity to thank the Footprint Project's many supporters, contractors, and donors for their generosity and engagement with the project, including the Abbey's congregation and volunteers, The Friends of Bath Abbey, local and national Trusts and Foundations, and Footprint's principal funder, The National Lottery Heritage Fund.**



**Guests enjoyed a relaxed and informal evening, where they explored the new spaces created by the Footprint Project, including the Discovery Centre, Learning Room, Song School and offices in Kingston Buildings. Bath Abbey's Lay Clerks and Girls Choir performed at intervals throughout the event, led by the Abbey's Director of Music, Huw Williams. Speeches were given by Reverend Canon Guy Bridgewater, Rector of Bath Abbey, Caroline Kay, representing The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Andrew Bragg, Bath Abbey churchwarden and Chair of the Footprint Project Board, thanking guests for their generous support of the Footprint Project.**

Stephen Girling, Bath Abbey's Missioner, said, **"We are grateful to all our supporters for their generosity, allowing us to transform the Abbey, to enhance our visitors' offer and to conserve the building for future generations. The Footprint Open Evening was a wonderful opportunity to share what we have achieved together."**



## Footprint and Beyond...

Photo Credit: Betty Bhandari

**Andrew Bragg** (pictured right) is an Abbey Churchwarden, in addition to being Chair of both the Footprint Project Board and the Abbey's Building & Fabric Committee. In this article, he looks back on the achievements – and challenges – of the Footprint Project and tells us more about the Abbey's exciting plans for future development.



Footprint - which started life in 2005 as a project to repair the Abbey's floor, yet quickly expanded into a much bigger undertaking - is now effectively finished. There are still some minor issues to address, but the only outstanding major issue is approval by The National Lottery Heritage Fund of Footprint's Project Evaluation Report which, when approved, will release the final tranche of funding.

**I'm immensely proud of what has been achieved.** Not only do we have a church fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but we also have a Song School, Discovery Centre, Learning Room and so much more. **Many challenges were overcome to achieve this wonderful result and I would like to show my appreciation for all Footprint's generous supporters: we would not have realised this amazing project without them.**

Footprint continues to be recognised nationally and internationally with prestigious awards, and has recently been nominated for the [2024 Royal Institute of British Architects \(RIBA\) South West Award](#). The Footprint team regularly links up with churches and cathedrals from across the UK to share best practice and the invaluable knowledge gained through delivering this innovative project. **And now to the future...**



Photo Credit: Rich Howman

During the Footprint building work, the Abbey was given dispensation to postpone our [Quinquennial Inspection](#). In Autumn 2023, the new Abbey Architect – Antony Feltham-King of St Ann’s Gate Architects – carried out the postponed Quinquennial Inspection, the findings of which will form the majority of the Abbey’s future development works.

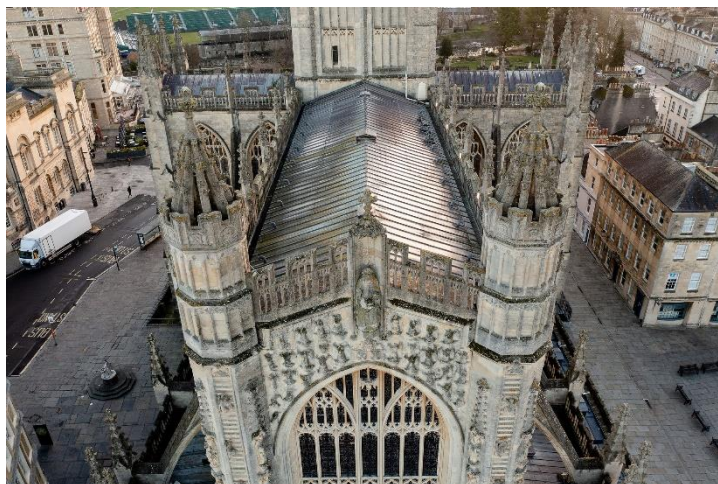
**I’m delighted to let you know that the Abbey is considered to be in a good state of general repair.** However, a number of areas of work have been identified by the Inspection Report, including a small number of compliance issues: checking the lightning protection system, evaluating the need for a Dry Riser, and ensuring the exposed Abbey Clock mechanism is protected. In addition, there are a range of minor maintenance issues, primarily concerned with painting, which will be addressed on a rolling schedule. On the basis of the report’s findings, we are now working with specialists to investigate whether treatment of the Abbey’s West Doors is necessary.



**The main issue found by the inspection concerns the lead on the Abbey’s roofs – all of which will need to be replaced within the next five years or so.** We have two immediate problems – water leaks in the Jackson Extension and Abbey Tower roofs. The Jackson Extension roof is comparatively new, so we are currently investigating whether there is a fault and/or whether the gutters and down-pipes cannot cope with the volume of water they receive. In the meantime,

Abbey Shop volunteers have been known to protect the shop’s beautiful products from water with strategically placed buckets – not an ideal or long-term solution, I’m sure you agree!

The Abbey Tower roof is equally pressing, with water leaking through onto the Abbey Bells and their support structure. Temporary protection is in place, but this is only a short-term solution. Fortunately, The Friends of Bath Abbey have received a generous bequest which they have very kindly offered to donate towards covering a proportion of the Tower roof repair costs.



Planning for the Abbey Tower repair work has already started, and an outline plan has been agreed for the other roofs - including the Nave, Chancel and South Transept roofs. The Abbey is committed to environmental sustainability and are partnering with the Diocese of Bath & Wells to support delivery of the [Church of England’s Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030](#). In service to this initiative, and as part of the programme of roof replacement, we would like to add solar panels to the Abbey and Kingston Buildings. This exciting development would

significantly help with the Abbey's electricity costs and move the Abbey towards achieving the Church of England's target of Net Zero Carbon by 2030. **We will need to raise significant funds to complete this vital work.**

The Liturgical furniture and, in particular, the choir stalls need to be replaced. The choir stalls currently being used are a temporary measure, as the old choir stalls were found to be in a very poor state and not practical to repair. We are in the process of developing a design with a specialist company which will reflect the main Altar Frontal and the differing colours of wood in the Nave chairs and the Corporation Stalls. Once again, we are immensely grateful to The Friends of Bath Abbey for funding this important project. Finally, at the start of Footprint we had to remove the Abbey's old porch. We found it was in a poor state of repair, so we erected a temporary porch which works very well. However, we will need to replace this temporary porch in the near future.

**So - there is plenty for us to carry on with, to ensure the maintenance and improvement of this magnificent building!**

I am heartened by the extraordinary support given to the Footprint Project and feel confident that together we can meet these new challenges. Your prayers and encouragement for this next stage of Abbey development will be very gratefully received.

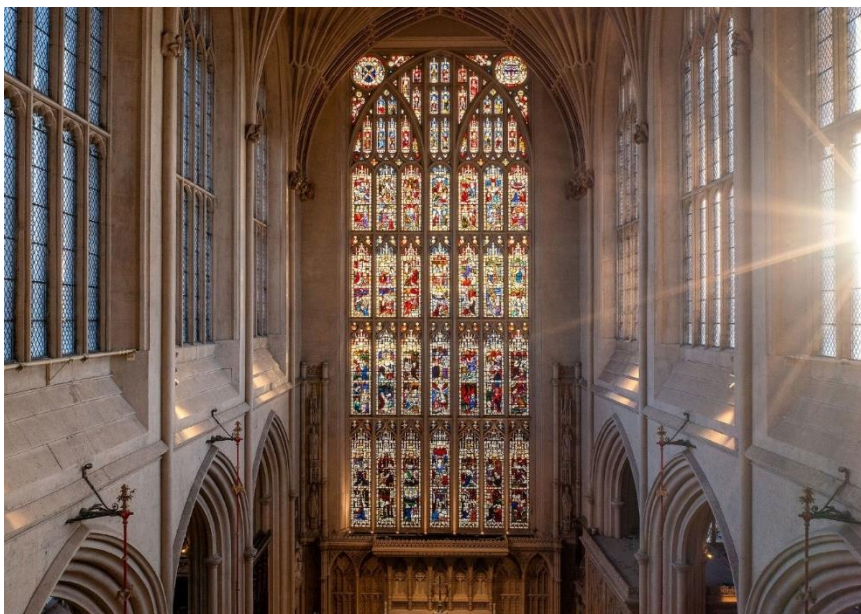


Photo Credit: Rich Howman

## THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to our supporters, who gave their time, their expertise, and generous donations to bring Footprint to life. This innovative project was made possible by our supporters' belief in the Footprint vision for Bath Abbey.

*If you have any questions about Footprint or our forthcoming development plans, please get in touch with Cath Foxwell, Fundraising & Development Manager, using [cfoxwell@bathabbey.org](mailto:cfoxwell@bathabbey.org)*



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