

ST MARGARET'S PARISH CHURCH, WESTHORPE

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL MAY 2026

Our service pattern continues to provide two services a month at St Margaret's – Holy Communion and Evensong with additional festival services as appropriate. It was a delight to have a wedding in August. The Act of Remembrance and the Carol Service were both well-attended. We received a small grant to allow for the repair of our church organ this year and we have warmly welcomed two organists, both village residents, who are kindly sharing the task of providing music for our services. We are very grateful to them.

With grants from the NHLF, The Ganzoni Trust, Arthur Williams Trust and The Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, the three windows in the north aisle have been fully repaired and restored along with the ironwork on the outside. The damaged stone work was repaired and replaced as necessary. This means the church will stay much warmer without the winter winds whistling through the missing and broken glass and it has also significantly increased the light levels. Interesting graffiti from previous workmanship was discovered in the process and our glazier kept up the tradition by signing and dating one of the glass panes.

Cleaning up after the bat colony, particularly in the breeding season, has always been a problem. This year we were awarded a grant from Natural England under their 'Living Alongside Bats in Church' initiative. The money has allowed us to purchase a large custom-made metal floor tray that collects the majority of the droppings and makes the hoovering up easier without further damaging the stone floor beneath. We also bought a new Dyson rechargeable cleaner and security locker. We are attempting to think more positively about the bats and are looking forward to welcoming two members of the Suffolk Bat Group who are coming to St Margaret's on the afternoon of 17th May to talk with and educate the Benefice youth group 'Branching Out' on the various species of bats that make their home with us.

We continue to receive donations of good quality paperbacks and hardbacks to the Book Table in the church for which we are grateful. The sale of books nets a small but steady income. This year, a Sum Up machine has been installed in the church which enables contactless payment. It is pleasing to find that this is being regularly used by our visitors as well as members of the congregation.

A volunteer team of six from the village ensure that the church is opened every day for prayer and reflection as well for the benefit of interested visitors. The team does a terrific job and we receive many notes of appreciation that the church is so accessible. Many thanks to the team.

Rosemary Mees, Churchwarden

