

## Update on St Denis' church and the churchyard as of 17 March 2020

### 1. St Denis' churchyard – notes and update of meeting held on 23 January 2020

A discussion about various matters concerning the churchyard/nature reserve was held in the churchyard between Sarah Brennan, Joyce Denby, Nicola Jenkins, Sebastian Kindersley, Peter Mann, John O'Sullivan and Revd Hilary Young.

It was decided we would like to:

- a) remove one large elm from the centre of the southern boundary of the churchyard (adjoining Sebastian's land) and to lower the remainder of that stretch of trees/hedgerow to a workable height above the fence/tree interface;
- b) fell the two horse chestnut trees that have had a fungal disease in the last few summers but not to replace them since the churchyard/nature reserve is primarily important and valuable as a grassland;
- c) follow up Joyce's suggestion of zoning the churchyard to conserve/encourage the most 'valuable' species of wild plants and grasses and the areas rich in diversity;
- d) continue to follow the management plan for mowing (on the [Hatley website](#)) but to modify areas to be cut if the zoning idea is applied;
- e) trim branches of overhanging trees on the north side of the churchyard;
- f) make a short path across from the path round the church to the Days' graves; and
- g) assess the population of the cave spiders *Meta bourneti* introduced to the tiny chamber under St Denis' church in 2006, probably in May this year.

We agreed we would first consult Siân Williams, Conservation Officer with The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire (WLT) on a, b, c and e.

Siân when asked said she would like to look at the trees on the north side of the churchyard before giving her advice on them but sees no problem with trimming the tree branches extending well over the churchyard.

Siân agreed the zoning idea should be considered and said she would visit in the spring/early summer. However, she has now taken over a new role within the WLT as Senior Monitoring & Research Officer and cannot offer to do this. Whoever replaces her will hopefully visit sometime soon.

Hilary advised that any significant changes to the churchyard such as removing trees would need permission. She later confirmed that the Gamlingay and Hatley Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for the churchyard and that permission for tree work must be obtained either from the Archdeacon or from the Diocesan Registrar.

Hilary is hoping that to simplify things and help move them along, she and one of the Church Wardens could be PCC leads of a 'task group' to manage the churchyard which would 'report' to PCC, and through which activities could be coordinated and permissions dealt with. The group needs to be of named people but others who might not want to be part of a formally recognized group could be asked to help.

Hilary has circulated the Diocese of Ely's 'Checklist of information required from Parishes applying for consent for works to trees in the churchyard' which requires a report from a qualified arboriculturalist setting out what work is being proposed, the reasons for it and how the work will be undertaken. Unfortunately an arboriculturalist was not found in time to make a report so permission could be applied for before the nesting season so has had to be deferred.

## Notes

Graves – Hilary advised that artificial flowers are not allowed on graves. Wreaths and cut flowers can remain until they wither. Trees and shrubs should not be planted on or around a grave. A separate faculty will need to be sought for this. Details of these ‘churchyard rules’ will be put on the Hatley website and maybe on the churchyard notice board.

Grass cuttings – Anyone is welcome to the good compost at the base of the large pile of grass cuttings in the south-west corner of the churchyard. We recognise this pile is not very attractive. Sebastian will gradually shift some of it to his compost heap.

St Denis’ scythe mower – Peter will organise maintenance of the St Denis’ mower and pay for it from the St Denys Church LNR / NS&I Investment Account (details of which were circulated to the Parish Council for 21 January meeting).

Insurance – the question of insurance for anyone working on the tree-cutting, and indeed any work on the churchyard, has been raised.

### **2. Sir George Downing Plaque – correction to update circulated for 21 January 2020 meeting**

We would like to amend the following section of the report circulated for 21 January 2020 meeting on the Sir George Downing Plaque, viz:

*‘Downing College’s General Purposes Committee has declined the request, initiated by Peter Man, to make a donation towards a Sir George Downing Plaque on the church.’*

To clarify:

Downing College’s General Purposes Committee has declined the request, initiated by Peter Mann, to pay for a Blue Plaque being affixed to the church to say the building was once owned by Sir George Downing – the exact wording was never discussed, and the whole idea has been discarded because of the cost.

The idea came from a Cambridge Past, Present and Future initiative – they coordinate Blue Plaques in Cambridge and in July 2019 extended the idea to South Cambs. As the Plaques cost £1,000, Peter thought it worth asking Downing College. The college was founded in 1800 through a legacy left by Sir George – it included ownership of much of East Hatley as part of their west Cambridgeshire estate, until they put it up for auction in 1945. The Friends of Friendless Churches thought it a good idea, but did say they ‘were not averse to a Downing plaque but we would have to have Listed Building Consent’.

### **3. St Denis’ churchyard hedge/tree trimming arranged for 22 March 2020**

A Sunday morning session is planned for Sunday 22 March mainly to trim trees and hedges around the churchyard. Peter has given the churchyard its first mowing this week.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann  
17 March 2020