

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve

Update for 20 October 2020 meeting of Hatley Parish Council

The **Heritage Open Days** (HODs), 11 am to 1 pm and 2 to 4 pm on three sunny days Friday 11 September to Sunday 13 September, attracted more visitors than we dared hope during the pandemic. We had 85 visitors in total and raised £105 for the Friends of Friendless Churches.

Inside the church were two display boards prepared by Joyce Denby, one with drawings and photos tracing the 'Evolution of St Denis', another of photographs, drawings and a painting connected with the chancel. Also available were leaflets prepared by Joyce on St Denis', the Downings, the Docwras and the 1870s restoration costs, and an article by Ishbel Beatty on the Saye rectors.

For this year's HOD theme 'Hidden nature', Nicola Jenkins set up a three-part display board of photographs, one of the cave spiders 'hidden below' (taken by John O'Sullivan), one of bats 'hidden above' (provided by Rachel Bates of the Bat Conservation Trust) and a central section of flora and fauna found in the churchyard/nature reserve (taken by John O'Sullivan and Nicola Jenkins).

Peter Mann gave informative talks to the visitors about the history of the building, pointing out various features and Joyce often took over to talk about some of the notable people who lived in Hatley.

Visitors came from Arrington, Cambridge, Cockayne Hatley, East Hatley, Hatley St George, Gamlingay, Great Gransden, Great Shelford, Impington, Melbourn, Sandy, Shefford and Northampton.

Special thanks to all those involved:

Joyce Denby for all the hard work that went into preparing the display boards and leaflets, for making the flower arrangements in the two niches in the nave, and for talking to visitors about Hatley's history.

Joyce also prepared a display board on the heraldry in Hatley St George church. This church was open at the same times as St Denis', thanks mainly to Penny Hewlett.

Peter Mann for conducting the tours, preparing and printing flyers, leaflets, a range of signs including Covid-19 signs, the 'A' boards etc. and beforehand, for registering with and preparing material for the HOD website and for advertising it on the Hatley website.

All those who, in pairs, welcomed visitors, collected names for Covid 19 regulations and general helped, viz. Sarah Brennan, Carole Cooper, Margot Eagle, Jo and Peter Hayward, Charlie Norman, John O'Sullivan and Gill Wilsher.

Sarah Brennan and John O'Sullivan for being on hand to talk about the wildlife in the nature reserve.

'Reference' photos of the main displays are at the end of this report.

Grant awarded by the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage for renovation of the chancel

A grant of £58,200 was awarded to The Friends of Friendless Churches from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund for further renovation work to St Denis' church. The announcement, on 9th October, was immediately added as a news item on the [Hatley website](#).

This is for repairs to the chancel: plain-glazing the windows in the north and south walls (to match those in the nave) and repairs to the chancel walls – consolidating tiles and plasterwork.

The money needs to be spent by 31 March 2021 and planning permission is needed before the work can begin so time is tight. Installing a new east window and stabilising the nave and vestry walls are still on the FoFC's 'to do' list – they are by no means forgotten.

St Denis' churchyard / local nature reserve

A final session of the year was held on 20 September to mow and clear the last quarter of the churchyard and tidy up the churchyard. The 'group of six' were Sarah Brennan, Joyce Denby, Nicola Jenkins, Peter Mann and Charlie Norman. Thanks go to all.

No further progress has been made towards seeking permission for the elm and horse chestnuts to be felled.

John O'Sullivan has written an interesting and informative article about what to look out for in the nature reserve through the seasons, illustrated with his marvellous photographs. Thanks to John and to Peter for putting the text and photos on the [Hatley website](#).

Nicola Jenkins / 20 October 2020



Far left Display of 'nature photos by John O'Sullivan, Rachel Bates and Nicola.

Left Joyce Denby's display of photos, drawings and text connected with and hung in the chancel.

Below Joyce's display on the evolution of St Denis' church. It was hung near the font.

