

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve

Update for 19 October 2021 meeting of Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

Planning for the third phase of the renovation

Stephanie Norris, the architect employed by the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC), visited the church on 29 July to look at renovation work completed this spring to the chancel and to consider the third stage of work needed to the church, after which it should be possible to open the church to the public and to hold events. An application was made to the second round of grants from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund (from which funding was obtained for the second phase of renovations) but was unsuccessful. Stephanie prepared the documentation for FoFC's planning application submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council for the 'repair and replastering of the nave walls, repair of reredos, sanctuary step and east window surround, minor roof repairs to resolve intermittent leaks and localised treatment of timber decay to roof'. This application, 21/03880/LBC, was discussed at an extraordinary meeting of Hatley Parish Council on 28 September and was fully supported by the Parish Council.

Still to be addressed when funds allow is the design and installation of a new east window. The problem of water ingress on the north wall has yet to be solved and a few tiles replaced.

Heritage Open Days (HODs)

St Denis' was open for England's Heritage Open Day festival from 11 am to 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm on 10, 11, and 12 September. The weather was mild and mostly sunny except for a heavy shower on the Friday morning.

In preparation for the event, Peter Mann wrote an article for [September's Gazette](#) (page 14), liaised with the FoFC and provided information for the [HOD's website](#). Joyce Denby composed interesting hand-outs about food and farming in East Hatley through the ages (and another about Hatley St George) for this year's HOD theme 'Edible England'. She also updated a display board about the chancel and the new window incorporating pieces of stained glass salvaged from the old east window. The face in the window with the golden mane of hair is that of an angel, probably an archangel, and could be Michael, Gabriel or Raphael (according to Joyce's research). Other boards displayed information about the new planning application, the evolution of St Denis' church and the survey of bats emerging from the church on 17 July. Visitors were asked for suggestions as to what the new east window should look like, when funds are available to install it. Joyce made three beautiful flower arrangements in the font and in niches in the nave. Nicky Adkins chalked the 'A' boards directing visitors to St Denis' which Peter put at the top of the road and the church path each morning. Nicola Jenkins arranged a rota of helpers to welcome visitors.

Joyce Denby and Peter Mann were on full-time duty for all six sessions to show people around the church and tell them about its history. Nicola was on hand to help.

A sincere vote of thanks goes to Joyce Denby and Peter Mann for all their preparation and for giving guided tours throughout the three days.

Thanks go to the team of people who welcomed visitors and collected names -Margot Eagle, Sarah Brennan, and John O'Sullivan, Mike Casey, Jo and Peter Hayward and Sofie Hooper.

The event attracted a total of 84 visitors from over 20 villages in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire. One man arrived on a smart orange

Claud Butler bike which Peter much admired and photographed. Joyce Dixon, who for many years chaired Hatley Parish Council, enjoyed a visit to the church on the Saturday afternoon.

A sum of £223.00 was raised for the FoFC largely from donations for the church including sales of bookmarks and leaflets.

Next year we plan to be open from 11.00 am through to 4.00 pm for the three heritage open days. Supposedly closing for lunch never really works as someone invariably turns up just before 1.00 pm.

CambridgeshireLive article

Max Willcock, a photographer with the Bournemouth News & Picture Service, took photos of the new window in the chancel, with Peter Mann on 28 September. This resulted in [an illustrated article by Max Willcock and Matt Jackson](#) being published on the website CambridgeshireLive on 12 October (albeit with some inaccuracies, most noticeably putting David Butterfield instead of William Butterfield although this was the fault of BN&PS).

Video on YouTube

Gerald Jones and his wife who run the YouTube channel [Village and Town History](#) took a video of St Denis' church on 2 September, after a preliminary visit on 19 August. [The 5-minute video can be seen for free](#), with a few captions but no commentary. The channel currently features videos of 18 English churches. The St Denis' video will be added to the Hatley website.

Victorian Society visitor

Tom Tyler, representing the [Victorian Society](#), visited St Denis' on 5 October.

Thanks go to Peter Mann for showing all these people round the church.

Flyer on St Denis' church and churchyard

Peter Mann has prepared an updated two-page flyer about St Denis' church and the churchyard as a hand-out for visitors and for the website. In doing so, he discovered that the FoFC now owns 60 churches.

St Denis' churchyard / local nature reserve

St Denis' mower improvements

Peter Mann arranged to have the scissor mower serviced this autumn. He also fitted some wheels to heighten the mower to make it much easier to use. The total spent was £116.03. Peter has been reimbursed from the St Denys Church LNR/NS&I Investment Account which now stands at approximately £1,231.

Tidy-up and mowing sessions

Thanks to Peter Mann for mowing all three-quarters of the churchyard before the Heritage Open Days. On 16 October he did a rough cut with the 'St Denis' mower' to make it easier to see what still needed doing the following day.

On 17 October, the north east quarter of long grass was mowed and raked by a party of six volunteers. Thanks go to Sarah Brennan, Ruth Chan, Joyce Denby, Peter Mann, Charlie Norman and John O'Sullivan.