

St Denis' church and churchyard / nature reserve

Update for 21st March 2023 meeting of
Hatley Parish Council

St Denis' church

Greater Cambridge Design and Construction Award 2023 for St Denis'

Stephanie Norris, the architect employed by the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC), entered St Denis' church for a [Greater Cambridge Design and Construction Award 2023](#) in the competition run by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service and the Cambridge Forum for the Construction Industry for the best construction projects completed in Greater Cambridge. Judges, including Dame Fiona Reynolds, visited the church on 27 January.

We are delighted to announce that St Denis' won the award for the category 'Best conservation, alteration or extension of an existing building (under £2m construction costs)'. [The judges said](#) 'This is a delightful and heart-warming project. St Denis' Church was closed and stripped out in the 1960s, and left to become almost derelict, smothered in ivy and structurally unsafe. Taken on by the Friends of Friendless Churches and with strong community support, it has finally received the attention it deserved. The Church has been transformed, given new life and added value for the local community. We found the enthusiasm from and engagement with the local community particularly inspiring, and hope the Church will be used for many events now that it has been brought back to life from the very brink.'

Winners were announced at an awards ceremony on 13 March at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge. Joyce Denby and Peter Mann were at the event. Rachel Morley, FoFC's director, was unable to attend but commented: 'Stephanie! *Heartiest* congratulations from all at FoFC. We are so thrilled. This is so richly deserved. And I promise, the east window is next on the list – I just need to get my Trustees to agree, which is harder than it may seem!'

Annual inspection of exterior of the church, 7 February

Two maintenance men, sent by the FoFC, inspected the exterior of the church building (the guttering, tiles etc.). Nothing untoward was reported.

Display table

A segment of the stage no longer needed in the village hall has been set up inside the church for the '39 things about St Denis' as you look round' leaflet and other literature. The visitors' book will be left there when the weather is better. The table is proving very useful until the FoFC can acquire a suitable desk.

Talk given to Wrestlingworth History Society by Peter Mann, 16 March

Peter Mann presented an illustrated talk to Wrestlingworth History Society entitled 'Rescuing a ruin: St Denis', East Hatley and its prominent people' in Wrestlingworth Memorial Hall on the evening of 16 March. It was very well received by an audience of around 30 people. The Society presented Peter with a donation of £35 for the Friends of Friendless Churches, to be added to funds for St Denis'.

Forthcoming workshop on techniques for cleaning churches which house bats

Nicola Jenkins hopes to attend a [workshop](#) organised by the Bats in Churches Project on techniques for reducing the impact of bat droppings and urine on church interiors, in Brampton on 15 April 2023.

Keyholders

Nicola Jenkins has taken over the responsibility of deputy holder of the keys for St Denis' church from Margot Eagle. Peter Mann remains the main keyholder.

Thanks, as always, to Peter Mann for keeping an eye on the church and for opening and closing it daily.

St Denis' churchyard / local nature reserve

Nicola finished building three woodpiles with logs from the volunteer elms on the southern perimeter which were recently cut back to around 6ft high. Remaining logs have now mostly been distributed to residents for use in their gardens for wildlife. Peter finished scattering the wood chippings over protruding tree roots on the footpath; they cover a good 60% of its length from the end nearest the churchyard.

Nicola sent an email with photographs of the elm hedgerow and the rest of the nature reserve to Lucy Wilson, Conservation Officer (Cambs) at the local Wildlife Trust who advised us on the project and followed this up with a recent telephone conversation. Lucy was pleased to see the result. She considers it time to review the 2010 management plan for the nature reserve. She will suggest this to her team and expects to be able to let us have a revised plan soon. Meanwhile, Nicola will circulate a note on some suggestions she made.

Nicola Jenkins and Peter Mann / 20 March 2023